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ABSTRACT

Four Ontario universities with extensive distance education programs were surveyed to obtain information on the nature and extent of the interaction that exists among tutors, students, and peers in undergraduate distance education programs. A total of 84 tutors and 447 students completed the questionnaires, which elicited information on the physical demographics of tutors and students, the role of the teacher, the impact of tutoring activities on students, the relationship between teachers and students in distance education, and their recommendations for future interactions in distance education. Analyses of their responses indicate that the communication process in distance education tutoring is uneven; i.e., while communication often exists in one direction, from tutor to student, it may be nonexistent between students. Also indicated were a cold educational environment, little affective support, and a sense of isolation among students. It was also found that tutors thought they had a wider impact at all levels than their students thought they had. It is concluded that adult learners bring strong commitment to their learning as well as experience and wisdom, positive qualities that could be utilized more effectively. A framework and model for future distance education experiences that redefines the teacher's role and emphasizes the interactive aspects of distance education concludes the report. Data are presented in both narrative and tabular formats, and the teacher and student questionnaires are appended together with instructions for coding the responses. (80 references) (DB)

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Mediation in Distance Learning: An Investigation of the Role of Tutoring

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June 1991

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Mediation in Distance Learning:
An Investigation of the Role of Tutoring

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Background and Rationale

Distance education is a rapidly expanding field that is attracting adults in all levels of education and in all areas of study. New institutions have been set up to operate primarily in the distance mode, the Open Learning Agency in British Columbia, Athabasca University in Alberta and Télé-université in Québec for example. Other such major Canadian universities as Waterloo, Laurentian and Memorial Universities offer a variety of programs in distance mode and cope with ever increasing numbers of both urban and rural students. In Ontario, in fact, 744 university credit courses are now available in distance mode for 1990/91 (COU 1990), and across Canada in 1990, thirty one universities offered 1876 distance credit courses (CAUCE 1989). Not only are university level programs involved in this expansion, but also secondary and community college programs as well as professional and vocational programs for adult re-training and continuing education.

Distance educators themselves are committed to the principle that fixed time and place are not essential criteria for teaching and learning: they adhere to a practical notion of universal access which enables learners, wherever they live and whenever they can schedule time, to undertake institutionally controlled quality education. Most educators no longer question the value of distance education as a viable method for busy adults to learn. The runaway success of the British Open University materials and enrolments has spurred this present expansion of distance education and the establishment of other Open Universities around the world. And education administrators see advantages in opportunities to

increase access and enrolments without the need for more physical space to house students. The successful operation of the Contact North/Contact Nord communications network across Northern Ontario has created unprecedented opportunities for cost effective delivery of distance programs for universities, CAAT, elementary and secondary schools, government sectors and other organizations (CN/CN Annual Report 1990/91).

While there are extensive established print-based distance delivery systems, known traditionally as "correspondence" courses, in approximately 35 Canadian universities, current developments in interactive technology are making a radical change in the design of courses and in the creation of distance education "classrooms". Where once regular mail delivery was the only form of communication available, now the use of telephone and electronic computer networks, audio and video cassettes and facsimile transmission (FAX) have expanded the communicative options to enable distance education to become more "people-inclusive and campus-expansive" (Cross 1987). These new communicative forms include: computer-text-based discussions and electronic mail (Davie & Wells 1991, Harasim 1989, Mason & Kaye 1989); telephone-based audio classes (George 1983, Burge, Norquay & Roberts 1987); and live television beamed in from a university classroom (Wong 1988). Students on the whole easily embrace these technologies (Burge & Howard 1990a, 1990b).

Recent changes in terminology in distance education parallel some of the changes associated with these new classrooms: student "dialogue" about course content is now as important as institutional "delivery" of that information; "contact" has given way to "interaction"; "correspondence" has become "integrated media"; and "asynchronous" (delayed time)

discussion is as relevant now as "synchronous" (real time) messaging. Gender sensitivity is now an acknowledged issue and a frame for analysis (Faith 1988).

The basic challenge remains, however: how to mediate learning effectively, and how to ensure that "tutors" have the conditions and motivation to do a high quality job, regardless of the technologies used for dialogue and delivery. Effective and high quality mediation often has to be carried out by someone who may not have been part of the original course development team. In distance education, unlike face-to-face classroom-bound classes, the tutor is a content expert who has to cope with a very heterogeneous student group. Skill and judgement are needed in grading and in interpreting the functions and cognitive levels of student exercises and assignments designed earlier by colleagues who may be unknown to the tutor. These exercises and assignments may be done through the mail, in computer-based messaging, in telephone-based classes and discussions, or in combinations of the above. The adult students, many of whom the tutor may never see, may live thousands of kilometres away, or live geographically close to the tutor, or to the institution. Many distance education students (in fact, approximately 65%) live in urban areas, close to major institutions, but their time, energy and work demands are such that they cannot or will not use traditional time and place-bound face-to-face classes. The tutor may be based anywhere in Ontario, and may have little or no training in how to help adult distance students work through their course materials. Even if the tutor has been given rudimentary guidelines, she/he may not find it easy to follow them in practice.

Who are these tutors and what do they actually do? We have used the word "mediation" in this report to describe a broad helping function, known as tutoring in some institutions and as advising or teaching in others. The most clearly defined tutoring function is found in the Open University (OU) in the United Kingdom and in some near replicas of the OU in Israel, British Columbia, Alberta and elsewhere (Thorpe 1988, Chalmers & Hunter 1988, Open Teaching 1988). In the Ontario context, depending on the institution, part-time instructors, faculty members, graduate students, counsellors, or community liaison persons may all play this role. It is the function and role of tutoring as performed for undergraduate courses in Ontario universities that this study addresses. The tutor is assumed to be the person in closest contact with the student throughout the course. He/she may engage in telephone, computer or face-to-face contact; may give feedback on assignments or examinations; may help learners understand course materials or objectives; may be a student advocate with a university; may counsel students on personal, vocational or educational problems. It is the academic advising or teaching role with which we are most concerned here.

Many Canadian distance educators, however, are concerned that teachers, tutors, advisers and others who help learners work through a course (the mediators), may lack the skills and "necessary creative insight" to adopt appropriate strategies offered by these new "classrooms". In short, will they continue "to do the same old things in more or less the same old way"? (Shobe 1986:230).

Into this expanding and changing education environment, with its new classrooms and reduction of physical and geographic boundaries, comes a changing teaching perspective with emphasis on student-centred adult learning. Distance education research and practice has entered a

developmental period which has the adult learner's needs and life and learning conditions in clearer focus than ever before (e.g. Kirkup & Von Prümmer 1990, Burge 1988, Haag 1988, Taylor & Kaye 1986, Thorpe 1986). Thus it follows that we must also examine the changing roles and responsibilities of those who are responsible for organizing the student's learning and for program design and implementation, that is the teachers, tutors and administrators involved in distance programs. It is clear that a process of redefinition of the role of the teacher in distance mode must be undertaken. The teacher, whether a faculty member, instructor or tutor may be more realistically and practically defined as a proactive mediator between program materials and the learner (Beaudoin 1990). This is a departure from the traditional view of the teacher as "information giver" or "dispenser of knowledge". As Beaudoin states, "faculty engaged in distance education must be adept at facilitating students' learning through particular attention to process, unlike classroom - based teachers whose traditional role is largely confined to selecting and sharing content" (p. 21).

Nevertheless, the central issue remains the same as it has always been in the traditional adult classroom: the quality of the relationship and interaction between the teacher and the learner, and amongst the learners. However, our current lack of empirical knowledge of what happens between the distance learner and those responsible for program delivery who teach, grade and assist them is a major problem that affects the quality of programs. Distance educators acknowledge that they lack structured descriptions of what such helpers actually do and do not do (Anderson 1989, Crawford 1988, Haughey 1989, Spronk 1988) and how their actions impact on student learning (Cole et al 1986).

This lack of empirical data is serious, given that distance learning modes have to rely on the student, either alone or in a group, interacting with tutors and material resources. The student's self-esteem, self-confidence, and ultimate level of success in a course can be influenced greatly by the kinds of interactions she/he has with the person assigned to grade papers, give academic help, and provide assistance. Distance students may never see their tutor or indeed anyone from the educational institution. If the issue of physical invisibility is added to the issues of being an adult learner, with home, work, social and community responsibilities and pressures, then there is greater potential for high levels of stress, frustration and even course withdrawal or failure. Distance mode learners, like classroom learners, require cognitive and affective feedback from peers and teacher (the reactive dimension), and opportunities for discussing what they currently understand or are puzzling out themselves (the proactive dimension in learning). These dimensions have been addressed in practice and research by large specialized institutions such as The Open University (UK) and Athabasca University, but their work has not been applied in detail to institutions which teach distance mode courses in addition to the traditional face-to-face courses.

2. Project Objectives

The present project was designed to document the nature and extent of interaction taking place between tutors and learners in undergraduate distance education programs. Specifically, the following questions were addressed:

1) who are the tutors (instructors, markers, and other mediators) and the distance learners in terms of their age, sex, education, geographic location?

2) how do the tutors and learners describe the roles and responsibilities of the tutor function?
3) how are the learners experiencing the impact of tutoring activities?
4) what are the tutors actually doing?
5) are new communications technologies being used for interaction between learners and tutors?
6) how would tutors and students like to see the tutoring or mediation function develop in the future?

3. Project Design

In the early stages of this project, preliminary discussions were held with distance education colleagues from across the country. Because our study appeared to be the first of its kind in Canada, we sought their opinions regarding the potential value of the project and the practical issues of sample selection and surveying. Subsequently, a project consultative committee was established, composed of ten respected educators/administrators representing institutions offering distance education programs in Alberta, Ontario and Quebec. The members of the Project Consultative Committee are listed in Appendix C.

Permission was then sought, and granted by four Ontario universities with extensive distance education programs to carry out the questionnaire survey as proposed with a sample of students and tutors involved in those programs. The participating Ontario universities were: Guelph, Queens, Laurentian and Waterloo. The strong support of these universities was encouraging. Each in turn emphasized the desire and the need for research-based data on distance education students and their needs.

The designated contact person at each institution was then asked to provide general information on the number of distance education students they expected to be managing over the September to December 1990 term, their program year level and the areas of study or program topics, as well as the number of tutors involved with those students, in order to determine an appropriate sample size. The distance education department contacts were assured that the study was not an evaluation of performance of either students or tutors.

The project team was also in contact with colleagues at Télé-université in Quebec City who were, at the same time, developing a research project within their own institution to examine the role and usefulness of the tutor in their own programs (Télé-université 1990). Many questions of concern to them reflected our own concerns in the Ontario context. An exchange of information and of draft survey instruments was agreed upon and communication continued, during both the instrument development phase and the data analysis phase.

An opportunity for consultation with a large number of colleagues was provided by the CADE/ACED (Canadian Association of Distance Education/Association canadienne d'éducation à distance) Conference in Quebec City in May, 1990. At this time, one of the principal investigators was able to meet personally with consultative committee members and other interested distance education colleagues. Their comments and advice on draft survey instruments were invaluable. Their support also was evident in their requests for copies of the final instrument and the project results.

II. METHODOLOGY

1. Developing the Survey Instruments

The initial project design recognized the need to develop two separate and distinct questionnaires to elicit information that would adequately reflect the concerns and provide the unique perspective of each target group that is, the mediators, including teaching faculty, instructors, tutors, markers, and the distance learners themselves. The questionnaires are appended to this report (Appendices A.1, B.1). We were presented with two areas of difficulty in the design of the questionnaires; first, we had to reduce a large number of initial questions to a manageable, user-friendly number, and second we had to avoid any hint of questions that could be construed as evaluative. Furthermore, we had to work "de novo" as no similar material was readily available that could be adapted for use in our project.

2. Consultation and Validation

An important step for us in the process of instrument development was consultation with OISE colleagues with expertise in questionnaire survey design and statistical analyses. Their advice, especially on attitudinal data and on gender issues, was most useful. Subsequently, the draft versions of the two questionnaires were sent to members of the project's Consultative Committee for review. The critical comments and practical suggestions made by committee members were most helpful in preparing the final versions of the questionnaires. Several other individuals - administrators and teachers in the distance education field - were consulted and invited to comment and make suggestions on the draft instruments.

The draft questionnaires were then pilot tested on a small sample of students and tutors in July-August 1990, with return requested by

September 15, 1990. Questionnaires were sent to 100 students and 9 tutors in the distance education department of one of the participating institutions, along with an explanatory letter informing participants of the nature of the study in general and their particular role in the pilot phase. The return rate of 25% for both tutor and student pilot groups was moderate but acceptable for the pilot phase. The responses were tabulated and analyzed and on the basis of responses and comments, modifications were made to both questionnaires.

3. **Sample Selection**

For the main study, a random sample of students was chosen equal to approximately 10% of the total enrolment in distance education programs at each participating university. Students enroled in more than one course per semester or per year were counted as one student to avoid duplication in the mailing. A total of 1040 questionnaires were mailed to students in the four institutions. When choosing the random sample for the one university that operates a co-op program with alternating work and study terms, we omitted from the sample all students for whom an on-campus mailing address was given. Therefore only those students who were in fact residing at a distance from the university were included in the sample.

4. **Administering the Questionnaire**

A mail-out questionnaire was clearly the best method to obtain data in this project. Mailing addresses for distance education students were provided by the Office of the Distance Education Coordinator at each university. Tutor home mailing addresses were not provided. Tutor questionnaires were directed to the individual through the appropriate university department mail. A postage paid return envelope was included in the mail-out package to facilitate and encourage return of the

questionnaires. The questionnaires were sent out by Canada Post first-class mail in mid-October with a request that they be returned no later than November 30, 1990.

5. **Analyzing the Data**

As a first stage of data analysis, coding categories were developed for all open-ended questions. To establish preliminary categories, two team members each selected 100 returned questionnaires at random and carefully reviewed each one and developed coding categories independently; the team members then agreed on a final set of comprehensive codes. In the case of the last open question, which asked for general comments, as a further validation measure a third, independent coder also generated a set of codes which was then compared to those agreed upon by the project team. The similarity of the coding categories developed by the research team and by the independent coder confirmed the reliability of the codes. A full list of the coding instructions used for each questionnaire is appended (Appendices A.2, B.2).

The coded questionnaire data were analyzed using the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSXX) data analysis procedures on the OISE central VAX computing system. Percentage totals for each coded category were obtained. Cross-tabulations and correlations, both within and across the two respondent groups, were discussed by the researchers.

The return rate for questionnaires from both tutor and student respondent groups was considered acceptable for this type of mail-out survey, 41% and 43% respectively. Table 1 (p. 57) shows the number of surveys sent out to each group and the number of returns received. Table 2 (p. 57) gives the breakdown of the student sample by institution.

III. FINDINGS

1. Descriptive Highlights: Tutors

Profile of Respondents

The questionnaire was sent out to 205 tutors working in the four academic institutions participating in the study: Guelph, Queen's, Laurentian and Waterloo universities. We received 84 responses out of the 205 sent, a 41% overall response rate (the response rate for each institution was very close, varying only between 39% and 42%). This response rate, although acceptable as a basis for statistical analysis, was somewhat disappointing.

An almost equal representation of women (48.2%) and men (51.8%) was evident. All age groups were represented, from 20 years to 60 plus years, with the majority in their twenties (29.8%), thirties (27.4%) and forties (22.6%), and fully 10.7% in the 60 plus age group. All respondents were university graduates: more than one third reported their present position as members of permanent faculty (34%) or sessional faculty (6%) and only 12% as extramural or occasional instructors. However, the largest number (43.4%) reported their position as graduate student or teaching assistant.

In terms of experience with distance tutoring there was a definite split between the inexperienced and experienced. Over one third were "novice" tutors with one year or less experience (37.3%) and another third were "experts" with six or more years experience (31.3%).

Reasons for working as a distance education tutor

Tutors were asked to rate the relative importance of four goals in their decision to tutor a course via distance mode (Table 3, p. 57). For a majority of respondents, the main reason related to the students: 61.0%

cite working with students as a very important goal. Earning extra income was a very important factor for 63.4% of respondents, a figure which may reflect the large proportion of graduate students acting as tutors. Similarly the 50.6% group for whom "gaining academic experience" was the most important factor, equates with the graduate student group of respondents. The fourth group (43.9%), was teaching a distance course mainly to fulfil departmentally assigned teaching responsibilities. Reasons given in such later open-ended question as "to have the satisfaction of assisting adult learners", and "to have more people learn" reflected the strong commitment to adult learning held by many respondents.

The primary location from which the majority carry out their distance education tutoring duties is the home (60.2%) rather than the institution (31.3%). Since a similar number of respondents (66.3%) report that they have other employment responsibilities, it seems likely that most of the distance work is done at home, perhaps during evening and weekend hours.

Course Load

Nearly two thirds of tutors work on one course only via distance mode (65.1%), but another one third (32.5%) have two courses. The number of assigned students varies from a low of under 10 students to more than 100 students. Generally, however, their student numbers are kept in the middle range. The majority deal with fewer than 50 students (67.4%) although fully 14.5% report that they tutor over 100 students at the present time. Tutors were asked how many hours per week they spend on their tutoring and related activities including preparation, marking and advising. A large majority (80.3%) reported spending 10 hours per week or less on tutoring activities. Eleven percent spend approximately

15 hours per week, and 3.7% spend up to 20 hours per week. Not surprisingly, many tutors commented here that time spent on tutoring varied from week to week depending on course assignment deadlines: "Grading large numbers of essay assignments requires so much time to do a good job that evenings and weekends are totally committed in the weeks when assignments are due in." In the intervening weeks, little or no time might be spent on distance education work.

The large majority are dealing with single semester courses, of three to four months duration (72.6%); only 21.4% report that they are dealing with courses covering a full two-semester academic year.

Tutor Skills

Respondents were asked a series of questions about specific tutor skills and their relative importance. A significant majority of respondents agreed on three skills as most important: first, having adequate subject knowledge (86.7%); second, being able to communicate the course content clearly (77.4%); and third, being available for advice or help (50.0%) see Table 4 (p. 58). Three of those highly rated skills - subject knowledge, communication and being available for help - were also thought by the respondents to be highly valued by their students (69.8%, 78.3% and 65.1% respectively). At the same time, these tutors considered that additional skills were thought to be important by students, in particular, being understanding about problems (65.9%). Table 5 (p. 58) shows the differences in perception between the tutors' beliefs about student assessments and students' actual assessments across the seven skills listed in the question.

Most respondents think that their tutoring time should be allocated across a variety of tasks although marking assignments was considered

the most time consuming, drawing an almost equal spread across three amounts of time between 25 and 50% of the respondents' time (33.3%), 50 to 75% (29.8%) and over 75% of their time (26.2%). A small majority thought they should spend less than 25% of their time on contact with students about course content (64.3% of respondents), and for counselling, advice and encouragement (67.1%). The tutors believed they ought to spend little time on course administration and course materials: 89.3% agreed that they should spend less than 25% of their time (or no time at all) on administration and 60.7% thought they should devote less than 25% of their time to revising or altering course materials.

However, the respondents varied slightly in their estimates of what they actually do. Regarding marking papers and assignments, the large majority (82.2%) estimated that they spent 50-75% of their time on this task (only 29.8%, however, felt they ought to spend this same amount of time on marking activities). Respondents reported that they spent little time on administration or course materials: 92.9% spent no time or less than 25% of their time on administration; 73.2% spent no time or less than 25% of their time on course materials. With regard to the actual time they spent on direct contact with students, the estimates were again low: many spent no time or less than 25% of their time responding to student requests for help about course content (84.3%) or for responding to students with advice and encouragement (85.5%).

Perceived Impact of Tutors

Generally, our tutor respondents felt they had some level of impact across all seven student activity areas listed (see question 18 in Appendix A.1). Indeed, some felt they had "a great deal" of impact in four areas: understanding course content (28.9%), sustaining self confidence and

preparing for examinations (21.7%). (The student respondents, on the other hand, reported substantially lower levels of impact than those reported by their tutors). Table 6 (p. 59) shows the levels of impact estimated by both students and tutors. These differences in perception between students and tutors will be discussed further in the next section.

When asked to estimate the level of difficulty their students faced in each of seven specified areas, our tutor respondents rated three areas in the "Difficult" to "Very Difficult" range (4 or 5 on a 5-point scale with 5 being "Very Difficult"). These difficult areas were: contacting and/or using the support of other students (57.1% of respondents), developing study skills (47.6%), and finding enough time in the day for their studies (42.9%). However, nearly one quarter of respondents indicated that they could not assess the level of difficulty the students faced in these areas. One interesting note here is that contacting and using the support of the tutor, perceived by one half of the tutors as being not difficult at all or of minimal difficulty, was supported by a large number of students (41.6%). In most cases, the tutors' estimates of the degrees of difficulty experienced by their distance students were higher than the students' assessments. Only in one case, that of "finding enough time in the day", do the tutors underestimate the students' level of difficulty (Table 7, p. 59).

Contact with Students

Tutors were asked a series of questions on the nature and frequency of their contact with their students. The positive responses indicated that the tutors thought adequate information was being given to students in the form of autobiographical information (69.0%) and an explanation of the role of the tutor (86.1%). Most tutors believed this was done by the

institution (58.6%) but a number reported that they volunteered this information themselves (34.3%).

The predominant form of initial contact made by the tutor with her/his students was through written comments on the first assignment (81.0%); this style continued in subsequent contact (89.0%). The forms of contact least used by the tutors (reported at the level of "never") were: electronic mail (88.3%), face-to-face meetings (79.2%) and tutor-initiated telephone contact (77.7%) (Table 8, p. 60). Respondents did indicate, however, that they contacted their students to respond to student requests, but the general frequency of that contact was not high: as Table 9 (p. 60) indicates, 45.7% of the responding tutors assessed their level of contact to be "once a month" and 22.2% reported less frequent contact, once every 6-8 weeks. However, 29.6% of tutors reported being in contact with their students once every two weeks.

The speed of return of feedback was said by most tutors to be quite rapid: 63.1% said that they tried to give feedback within one week, and 33.3% within two weeks (Table 10, p. 61). The students' work, along with their tutor's feedback, is generally returned to students through the distance education coordinator of the institution (73.8% of respondents). Direct mail via Canada Post is used by 20.2% of respondents.

Tutor Training

Several questions about preparation for the role of tutor were asked, in particular, the tutor's opinions about future training needs. It appears that the tutors get much of their preparation from documentation (71.6% of respondents). Over half of tutor respondents received other forms of preparation such as a meeting with the distance education coordinator (57.7%) or a training session at the institution (58.2%). Informal help

from peers was reported by a small number (5.9%). Informality appears to guide any subsequent training: of the 45.6% of respondents who said their institution did seek their feedback on follow-up work, 67.6% said that feedback was collected informally. Mail out surveys or questionnaires were sometimes used (11.8%), and information requested during seminars somewhat more often (20.6%). Critical feedback from their students would, for 69.9% of respondents, be a "useful" to "very useful" form of training, if it were to be adopted. Otherwise, the two other forms of potential training we listed - informal help from experienced tutors, and in-service workshops - did not attract the respondents: 42.0% and 27.1% respectively. The largest number of tutors (44.1%) considered that "working with adult learners" was a topic for training activities that would be beneficial. Three other topics were rated by approximately one third of the tutors as being beneficial - revising/adapting materials, marking and grading, and counselling and advising. Otherwise, almost half the responding tutors did not believe that they would benefit from training on any of the six topics.

We end this section of the report with a description of the tutors' opinions about their work and their students. Only two proposed opinions drew unequivocal reactions from a majority of respondents: 85.7% strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement that "tutoring is the same as classroom teaching". A similar number believed that "tutoring is an essential element of distance learning". The other two statements given received mixed reactions: slightly more than half the tutors (54.8%) did not find their tutoring to be a frustrating experience and a similar number (56.6%) agreed that tutoring has helped them improve their general teaching skills.

Affective Reactions

Grading of papers in general, as well as specific comments related to marking (the repetitive chore of marking large numbers of papers, time pressures when assignments arrive all at one time, late assignments) formed the largest single category of responses to the question of which aspects of their distance work the tutors least enjoyed (42.5% of respondents). Clearly, many tutors also dislike the anonymous and impersonal aspect of their grading and are frustrated by "having to assign grades that are damaging to morale .. and not having the time nor opportunity to make sure [their] statements are understood."

Administrative problems were cited by some as the least enjoyable aspect of their work (15.2%) and the impersonal nature of the contact with students by an equal number of respondents (15.2%). These tutors, who earlier in the questionnaire confirmed that they enjoyed distance mode tutoring mainly because they enjoyed working with students, often felt frustrated in their inability to help students as much as they would like. Comments such as those that follow indicate the frustration that is sometimes felt: "[There is] difficulty in helping students... when you really need to sit down with a student and go over an assignment line by line"; "[I miss] being able to help people at the time they need it"; "I miss the one to one contact which makes discussion of problems/concerns/insights so much more comprehensive."

Some tutors cited a low level of institutional support, both financial and organizational, especially at the departmental level, as a source of frustration for them. "The most frustrating part ...is the lack of recognition (time and value) it gets on the departmental level"; "...having a phone budget would be a wonderful idea"; "Teaching adults, part-time and at a distance, is lowest possible priority...".

Putting things in a more positive light, many respondents commented at length on the more enjoyable aspects of tutoring, comments which often reflected a commitment to adult learning well beyond the simple fulfilment of departmental teaching responsibilities. The satisfaction of contacts that do take place with learners, sometimes over the long term, and of assisting adult learners generally, headed the list for the largest number of tutors (33.3%). Meeting, figuratively at least, a diverse cross section of learners who differ in age, experience and geographic location and the satisfaction of seeing the results of a student's efforts reflected in consistent progress through a course were affective features mentioned by some (23.6%). Other respondents (27.8%) focussed on cognitive aspects as the main sources of satisfaction in their distance tutoring: they cited "developing the course and designing innovative, thought-provoking exercises", explaining and discussing content questions, clarifying concepts and providing critical feedback. "As a tutor, I find it an interesting, imaginative process to be involved in at the present."

2. Descriptive Highlights: Students

Profile of Respondents

The questionnaire was sent out to a total of 1040 distance learners in the four institutions, with a 43% response rate, as shown in Table 2 (p. 57). The student population was predominantly women (74.7%) with men forming 25.3% of the total sample. Although all age groups were represented, the majority of student respondents were in their twenties and thirties (69.5%) and nearly one quarter were between forty and forty-nine years of age. Very few respondents were at either end of the age spectrum, that is, under twenty or over fifty years of age. A clear majority were working full-time (61.1%) and some others part-time (17.3%), while taking distance mode courses.

Program and Course

Enrolment was spread across a variety of program types: arts, humanities and education (37.7%); social sciences (38.2%); natural science, medical science, math and statistics (20.1%); and such programs as home economics, family studies and physical education (4.0%). In terms of their level within a program, the respondents were almost equally divided between first year (29.3%), second year (29.7%) and third year (30.6%). Only 39 respondents (8.8%) were taking a fourth year or post-graduate course. It is of interest to note that while most respondents were taking just one course via distance mode (70.0%), a respectable minority (21.3%) were taking two courses concurrently. Two thirds of all the respondents were already experienced at taking distance mode courses: 30.2% had taken from three to five courses previously; 14.9% had taken from six to ten courses; and a significant number (17.8%) had taken eleven or more courses by distance. Most (74.4%) had earlier university education in traditional classrooms. These responses evidence a commitment to distance courses over a complete study program and a commitment to a combination of work and study responsibilities over the long term.

Distance Factors

In terms of respondents' geographic location with respect to their own institution or another university, 35.5% lived in an urban community with a university. Another 40% were resident in the high population density area of southern Ontario and 19.6% were residents of northern Ontario. Out of province and out of country students, from Newfoundland to British Columbia, from Iqaluit, N.W.T. to Brazilia, Brazil, accounted for 5% of respondents. Nearly all lived within easy driving distance of a public library (90.2%) and a clear majority reported

they could drive to a high school, college or university library facility (68.5%).

When asked why they were taking a course via distance mode, nearly a third of the respondents reported that the demands of a working adult life precluded attendance at regularly scheduled, on-site facilities, regardless of whether their classes were scheduled in the day or evening. For 23.5% of the respondents, geographic distance from a university necessitated their use of the distance mode. The need to acquire an additional credit to complete a degree program, enter a specialty program or accelerate their progress through a program was cited by 15.8%. Respondents frequently cited several reasons for their decision to study via distance mode:

> [Distance education] better meets my needs as I work full time, cannot and do not want to travel to [campus], do not want to go to night school,... enjoyed working at my own speed and modules are excellent study and learning guides.

Contact with Tutor

One of the most striking findings of the study was the very low level of student-initiated contact with tutors. This lack of contact was evident in each of the three major areas in which contact might be expected to take place, that is, to ask general questions about regulations and requirements, to ask for help and/or changes specifically related to the course, and to discuss personal problems or learning difficulties that were affecting the student's progress. As shown in Table 11 (p. 62), only four reasons for contact out of the sixteen listed in question 13 were reported at the "sometimes" or "rarely" levels by thirty percent or more of the respondents: (1) to ask questions about general administrative issues (37.1%), (2) about course requirements (33.7%), (3) about the

course content (31.9%), and (4) to request an extension of time on assignment deadlines (30.1%). A small percentage of students had contacted their tutor to ask for clarification of the tutor's comments on their assignments (22.3%), to ask for help in preparing an assignment (20.7%) or to question an assigned grade (19.5%). However, generally, the respondents appeared to be either fairly self reliant or determined not to contact their tutor for anything other than grade - related issues. For example, between 80% and 100% of respondents would never contact their tutor for resolving family or work-related problems (95.0%), for discussing basic study skills (95.0%) for clarifying learning goals (93.0%), for getting encouragement (90.3%), for discussing academic progress (88.2%) or for requesting a change in course activities (93.5%) or a change in course format (89.2%). Nearly 82% of respondents would never contact their tutor for help in searching out research materials and 81.5% would not contact the tutor in order to get help when preparing for examinations.

To begin to delineate the areas in which distance learners might benefit the most from help from a tutor, respondents were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale the level of difficulty they experienced in several areas of study. They reported having little or no difficulty at all in using course materials (82.7%), understanding and completing assignments (62.5%), accessing resource materials (54.0%) and developing study skills (61.1%). Only two areas of significant difficulty emerged in response to this question. The first, experienced by 31.5%, was in contacting and using the support of other students. The second difficulty, reported by 57.3%, was finding enough time in the day to study. Although both men and women experienced the second difficulty, in fact more women than men found time to be a problem for them (60.8% and 48.6% respectively).

Tutoring functions are designed to help students in a variety of ways throughout the learning process. We asked respondents to assess the extent to which they had been helped by tutoring, with the results shown in Table 12 (p. 63). These results show that tutors were perceived by a large majority (66.7%) to be helpful at only a moderate level for understanding course content, with much lower levels of perceived help around developing critical thinking skills, exam preparation, maintaining confidence, applying new knowledge and acquiring study skills. What is also significant about these assessments is the high proportion of "cannot say" and "not at all" responses. It is evident that the respondents saw tutoring as a help primarily in understanding course content; furthermore, this emerged as the type of help most wanted by over half of all respondents (51.0%) as shown in Table 13 (p. 63). The type of help students wanted next was preparation for exams (41.0%), which 28.5% said they received to a moderate amount, and 5.4% a great deal. So, in general terms, what respondents said they wanted, they mostly received.

In order to provide help, there must be regular contact between the tutor and the learner. We asked students eight questions about the quality and frequency of their contact with the tutor, both initial and ongoing. A majority of respondents (54.0%) initially encountered their tutor through her/his written comments on the first course assignment. Other forms of contact before the first written assignment, either by telephone, audio-conference or face-to-face meetings were rare. A majority (59.2%) indicated that the tutor's role had been explained to them, most often through the print course materials (45.2%).

During the course, contact with the tutor continued to occur most often through feedback on written assignments; a large 72.6% listed this

frequency level as "often". Table 14 (p. 64) shows the complete results. It is interesting to note that one half the students (50.5%) did not take the initiative to request help, and another 25.0% considered that strategy as not applicable to them. Another note of interest, reflected in other data as well, was the minimal use of face-to-face meetings, and audio and computer conferencing made by students and tutors. When students did take the initiative to establish contact with their tutor, it was most often because the student had a specific problem to be solved (47.7% of respondents). Even this kind of contact was not frequent; 86.4% of the respondents contacted their tutor less than once a month. Given that most of the courses were one semester (three to four months) in length, such contact appears to be minimal. Students indicated, however, that they would like contact to be more frequent (47.2%). They regarded the best form of tutor contact for them to be comments on written assignments (51.7%), followed by being available during specific hours (46.5%).

Assessments of the overall quality of contact with the tutors were lukewarm; while 35.9% rated these contacts highly, at the 4-5 level of satisfaction on a 5-point scale, a somewhat greater number (38.2%) were in the middle range, neither satisfied nor unsatisfied, and 25.2% reported varying levels of dissatisfaction and frustration, at the 1-2 level of the scale (Table 15, p. 64).

Feedback on Assignments

We have seen that contact between the tutor and the distance learner most often takes the form of feedback on written work. Thus, the time it takes to get feedback on an assignment is crucial for the learner who needs an assignment returned in time to make adjustments to following papers. "It would be nice to get feedback to make sure I'm on the right track before it's too late!" Respondents indicated, however, that

reasonable, but not rapid, turn around times were in place; 35.0% report that they usually receive assignments back within three weeks, 34.7% within four weeks, and only a few (13.0%) after four weeks. A lucky 17.4% received feedback within two weeks. Not surprisingly, the regular postal service was the usual mode of delivery for 92.3% of respondents, however, only 78.0% are satisfied with this method of return. Slow mail delivery service was seen by those learners living a considerable distance from their institution as the main cause of delay in returning assignments.

Students indicated that they are not always getting the kind of feedback they want, nor are they being asked to indicate what the tutor could do to help their learning. Table 16 (p. 64) shows the differences between feedback received and feedback desired. It is evident that the affective needs covered in the term "encouragement" are not always being met; only 31.1% reported receiving encouraging comments with their feedback.

A majority of distance learners (74.8%) expressed a need for support and encouragement from a tutor via comments they receive on their assignments. However, they do request "positive reinforcement (not sarcasm)". When given, such support is warmly received: "[my tutor's] support and encouragement was like a breath of fresh air and provided to me the drive and desire to attain the 'A' I received rather than an incomplete credit".

A very large proportion of respondents have not been asked by their institution (82.9%) nor by their tutor (88.3%) about how the tutor could help their learning. But many 59.3% said they would like to be asked.

Tutor Skills

What does the learner consider to be the most important skills for a tutor? Two tutor skill areas were considered most important by 89% of respondents (see Table 5, p. 58); having adequate subject knowledge, and being able to communicate that knowledge clearly. Then a significant drop in expectation - 54% wanted the tutor to have practical experience related to course content and 51% wanted the tutor to be available for advice and help. Most students did not expect their tutor to show understanding about problems that might affect their learning (83%), or about administrative procedures (80%). And most did not expect their tutor to be expert in the use of communications technology (92%). While most of the students wanted to see their tutors knowledgeable about course content, however, almost half (48.4%) of respondents to a later opinion question agreed or strongly agreed that "with a good course manual, I don't need the help of a tutor".

On the whole, our respondents did not feel disadvantaged as distance mode students - 50.5% agreed or strongly agreed and 24.0% were neutral on this issue. Some students, in fact, expressed very positive views such as: "I feel advantaged as a distance student. It makes you work a little harder on your own. You get a greater feeling of achievement". Another positive reaction was seen in respondents' opinion of their improvement in study skills because of their studying by distance modes; 60.4% agreed or strongly agreed that these skills had improved although the neutral reaction still weighed in at 26.2% of respondents.

Contextual Impacts on Students

Respondents were asked for their opinions on the general impact on academic studies of the demands of home, family and work

responsibilities. These influential contextual factors operate in two dimensions: first, the general personal impact on the student, and the specific relevance to the tutor-student relationship.

Regarding opinions about personal impact, there was solid agreement by both male and female respondents that the demands of home, family and work responsibilities do adversely affect the studies of adult learners (73.2% and 66.1% respectively). However, opinions did vary about this impact as it affected men and women. Regarding the second dimension of the issue, the tutor-learner relationship, there was again significant agreement that a student's special situation is indeed relevant to this relationship. However, as with the first dimension, opinions differed on how the learner, the tutor, and the institution could take responsive action. While many requested "more flexibility and less rigidity" in assignments and deadlines, others felt all commitments should be kept and advised tutors not to "coddle students!"

Concerning the responsive action of the student, while a large number of respondents supported the idea that the student was responsible for informing his or her tutor about a special situation that affected studies (41.9%), a smaller but still considerable number (22.5%) disagreed. These students felt that once accepted into a course, "it's the student's responsibility to complete the assigned work" and "...if you can't balance home, etc. responsibilities with school then one should not be enrolled in class". A further 25.5% neither agreed nor disagreed.
Concerning the tutor's perception of student problems, nearly half the respondents felt that once a tutor was made aware of a situation that affected a distance learner's progress, the tutor should then somehow take this into account (47.7%). Similarly, regarding the institution's responsibility, half of all respondents agreed that the institution should

be expected to be flexible in the face of special situations that may arise unexpectedly in the lives of distance learners. "Don't treat distance students the same as young, full-time students. Many distance students are 35-45 years old and are employed and caring for families - a little understanding of this helps". One quarter, however, did not agree that this can be expected (24.5%) and another 27.8% neither agreed nor disagreed on this question.

Affective Reactions

When asked to indicate which aspects of distance learning they most enjoyed, a clear majority (57.4%) referred to the element of time flexibility, an understandable answer given their earlier problem of finding enough time to study, for example, "I study when it's my time and not someone else's time", "I can 'attend lectures' when I feel fresh and relaxed, not after a full day at work". Control over the scheduling of study time in an adult's already busy schedule was clearly the greatest benefit to these respondents. Others mentioned the challenge and "great sense of accomplishment" they felt with their independent study (20.1%), the course content itself and learning new information (7.2%), the convenience of study without travel (5.5%) and, generally, the opportunity to combine studies with work and family responsibilities.

Given the responses described above regarding contextual impact on students, it is not surprising that "time pressures" stood second on the list of least enjoyable aspects of distance learning (reported by 17.4% of respondents). The aspect most often cited was the lack of peer contact (28.7%) with the lack of tutor contact coming in third (12.8%). Slow feedback on assignments was mentioned by 10.6% of respondents. Other aspects were mentioned by smaller numbers: problems with

assignments in general (8.3%), course content problems (6.5%), course design (5.8%) and assessment (4.8%).

Overall, distance learners and tutors shared a similar perception of the role of the tutor. There was general agreement that the tutor's role in distance teaching was quite different from that of the classroom teacher (53.1%). Student respondents underlined the importance of good course materials, to the point that nearly half (48.4%) felt that good materials might obviate the need for a tutor's help. "A good study guide to go with every text would help more than a tutor". However, at the same time, a large number agreed that a tutor's help and encouragement were an important support for their learning process (56.8%), for example, "A good tutor gives a human touch to distance learning"; "I feel I've had more helpful feedback in this course than other 'face-to-face' courses". These learners do not feel "disadvantaged" in their distance mode learning situation. Rather, they are very positive about their developing academic skills, their ability to progress through an academic program, and the opportunity to pursue their post-secondary studies in this manner: "...it would help to have immediate access to an instructor, but it beats not being able to work towards a degree at all".

In addition to the descriptive highlights above, two additional analyses of the data were undertaken: to look for any significant differences attributable to gender, and to discover the extent to which differences were attributable to the context of a specific institution. Overall, very few differences emerged to justify extensive description. However, several findings related to the role of gender are worthy of attention.

The Role of Gender

First, dealing with the issue of gender in subject content and academic work-related areas, there was little difference between the responses of men and women. In such areas as difficulty in using course materials, completing assignments, developing study skills, and using tutor support, no gender differences appeared. No major differences emerged in the evaluation by men and women of the importance of various tutor skill areas. Only in response to questions that related to the expanded, non-academic context of daily life activities did modest variance occur. For example, slightly more men than women reported that home, family and work responsibilities had an adverse effect on their distance studies (73.2% - men and 66.1% - women). Is it possible that women are better able to incorporate studying into their weekly schedule because they are already managing complex home and work schedules? Our female respondents certainly recognized that there was an impact, but they did not all qualify this as an adverse effect. They did, however, comment often on the need for understanding of their complex situations: "I find most tutors (markers) are not very tuned in or sympathetic with today's woman trying to raise a family, study and work outside the home".

Women missed the peer contacts of the classroom somewhat more than the men; while 30.6% of women cited lack of peer contact as the aspect of distance learning they least enjoyed, only 22.5% of men gave the same response. Men, on the other hand, were more concerned about assessment generally than were women; while 10.6% of male respondents gave concerns about marks and assessment as the aspect they least enjoyed, fewer women (3.0%) reported the same concern.

A majority (74.8%), of both male and female respondents, expressed a need for support and encouragement from a tutor via the comments they received on their assignments. As this is often the only form of communication that takes place between the learner and the tutor, the importance of supportive comments cannot be underestimated.

IV. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

We recognize the limitations of the present study in that it relied solely on a written survey instrument for data collection, and the number of respondents is only a small sample of the estimated 10,000 adults completing an undergraduate university course via distance mode in Ontario. Nonetheless, we believe that our findings do provide a snapshot of what is occurring in Ontario in 1990 and, as such, raise issues that merit careful consideration by all those involved in distance education program delivery.

These issues are discussed under four themes: (1) the current place of the tutor in distance learning relationships, (2) characteristics of the tutor- learner environment, (3) key elements affecting distance learners, and (4) some differences in perceptions of tutors and learners.

1. The current place of the tutor in distance learning relationships

Survey findings indicate to us that the actual place of the tutor in distance learning relationships is as illustrated in Figure 1 below. The weak links in these relationships are indicated by broken lines, the stronger links by unbroken lines. The tutor is in the middle, between institutional responsibilities and constraints on the one hand and the needs of the learner on the other, very much like the filling in a sandwich.

Figure 1 does show contact taking place between the tutor and the learners, but this is mainly on a one-to-one basis, and mainly in one direction, from tutor to learner. The communication process is uneven; learners have indicated that they initiate contact with the tutor only infrequently, and when they do, the interaction is not always a satisfying one. Furthermore, learners are not communicating with each other. The tutor, in turn, does not often have a collaborative relationship with either the institution, the course developer or the course supervisor.

The tutor as the "filling in the sandwich", is at present a very thin filling, with a limited effect. We believe that the tutor can be given a stronger presence and have a greater effect in the overall scheme of learning relationships.

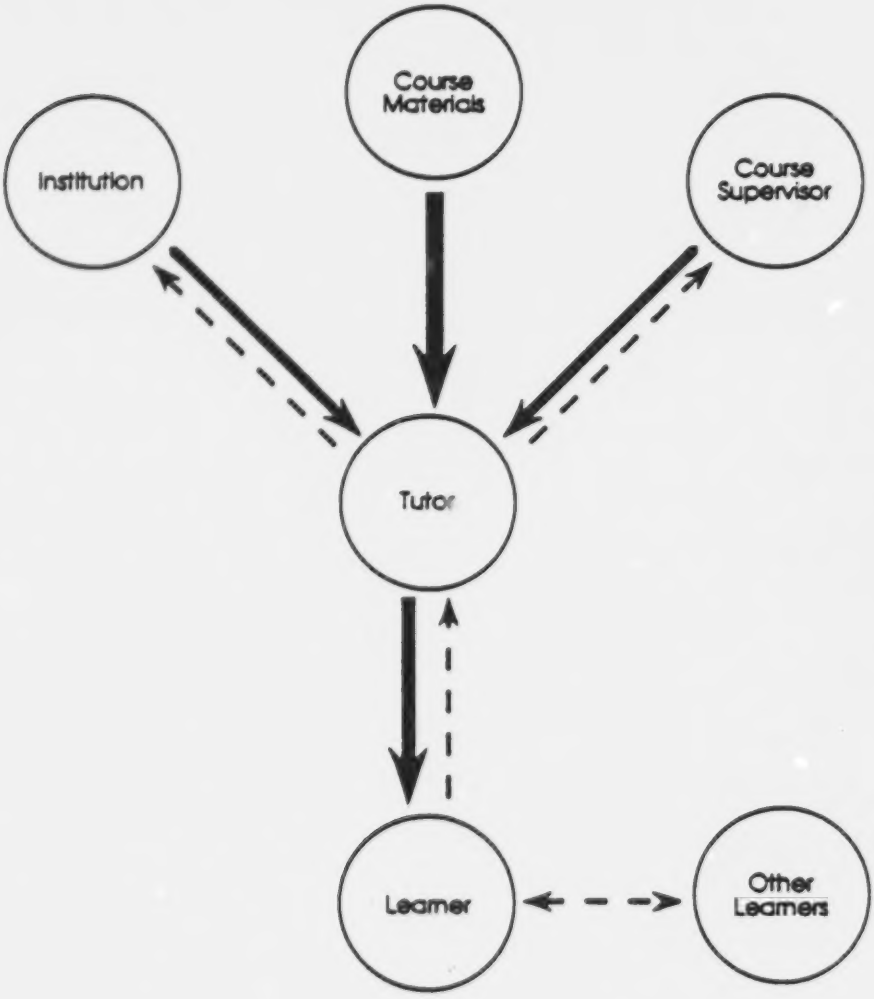
2. **Characteristics of the tutor-learner environment**

We can conclude from all respondents that the personal relationships established within the distance learning context do not allow for a great deal of interpersonal warmth between the participants in the process. And although there are some positive values that emerge from the data, for example, the sense of achievement on the part of those learners who work independently and successfully, and the satisfaction of expectations being met, (even though those expectations may have been low to begin with), there is still little recognition of the adulthood of the learners and how this can be used as a positive attribute in the learning process. Tutors exhibit a greater responsiveness to the grading aspects of tutoring than to the broader functions of teaching and nurturing.

From the survey data it is our view that the world inhabited by tutors and learners can be characterized by six conditions:

i) It is a silent world, generally - almost three quarters of tutors make contact with their learners only via written comments and grades

Figure 1. Actual place of tutor in distance learning relationships



on assignments and thus they remain faceless and voiceless to the learner. Tutors are not using interactive technologies of any kind to stay in touch.

ii) It is a cognitive world, generally - contact that does occur involves course content questions mainly. Although three quarters of the learner respondents want overt encouragement with their assignment feedback, only one third receive such affective support.

iii) It is a receptive and reactive world, generally - students are cast in a receptive role: they seldom contact their tutors (partly because they find that tutors are not readily available beyond normal office hours); they focus instead on studying course materials provided and completing assignments independently. Tutors are cast in a reactive role: they wait for assignments to arrive in order to grade and comment on work completed.

iv) It is a cool interpersonal world, generally - the students give at best neutral assessments of the general quality of contact with their tutors and consider that tutors have only marginal impact on their studies. Only half the tutors considered that being available for help and encouragement for students beyond the limits of clarifying course-related material was of high importance.

v) It is a warmer, more satisfactory intrapersonal world, generally - most students experience no serious difficulty in using course materials, in fact many experience a strong sense of achievement and a great majority enjoy the flexible, efficient use of time. For the most part, learners do not feel disadvantaged because they are taking courses via distance mode, rather they feel privileged to have the opportunity and they request expanded programs.

3. Key elements affecting distance learners

Figure 2 below with the learner at the center of the diagram, illustrates the complex set of elements affecting distance learners. Here, the tutor is one element in the cognitive and affective domains in the complex, demanding and sometimes unpredictable contexts of adult learners. The logistical elements are all those procedures and requirements necessary for smooth entry into and passage through a course, from enrolment to final examination. Personal and community responsibilities, as we have already discussed, also have a great impact on progress through a course. These conflicting demands on the learner's time and energy may necessitate the creation of institutional services which can take those demands into account.

The configuration shown in Figure 3 below is our estimate of how key elements interact at present. Of particular note is the affective element, one which has commanded much attention in the tutor training literature (Open Teaching 1988, Chalmers & Hunter 1988, Miskiman 1984, George 1983). In Figure 3, the affective element does not quite reach the student. There are certainly cognitive connections, primarily with the course materials and secondarily with the tutor. The cognitive influence of other students is minimal at the present time. Contact with the Distance Learning administration appears to be satisfactory in terms of the logistical elements of registration, course information and examinations. Personal and community responsibilities have an influence on these logistical arrangements throughout the course process.

4. Some differences in perceptions of tutors and learners

Two major differences in the perceptions of tutors and learners were evident from our findings. The first difference was the perceived impact of tutoring on the student's progress through a course, a central issue for

Figure 2. Key elements affecting distance learners

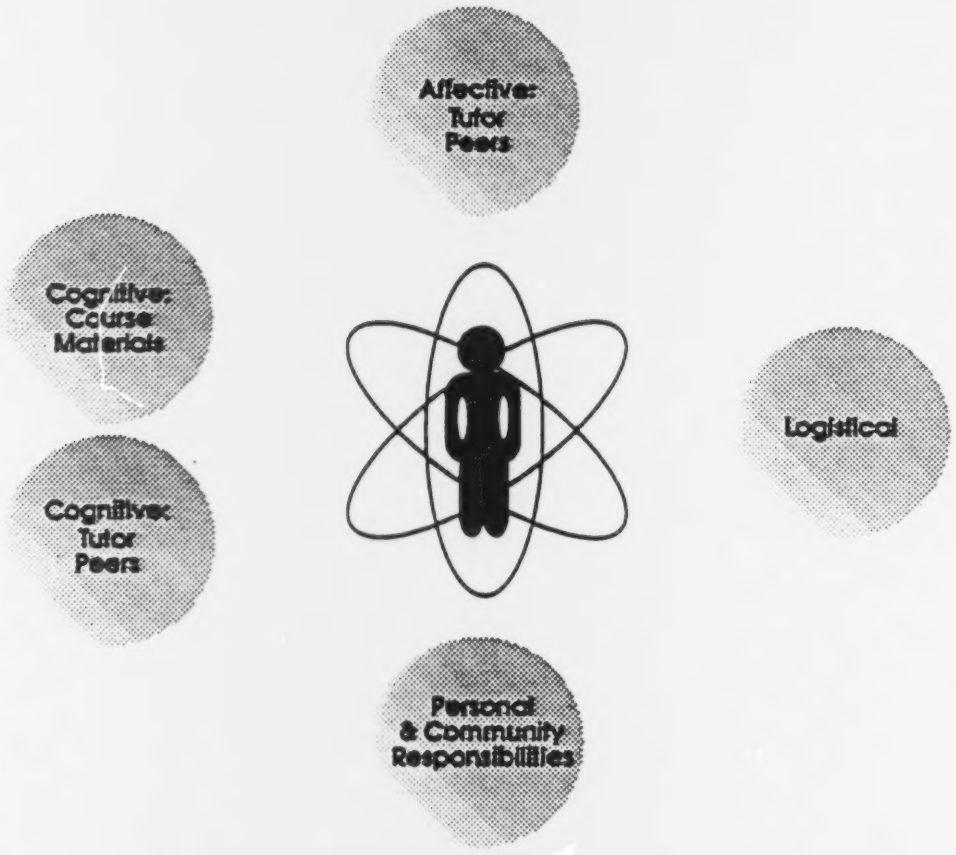
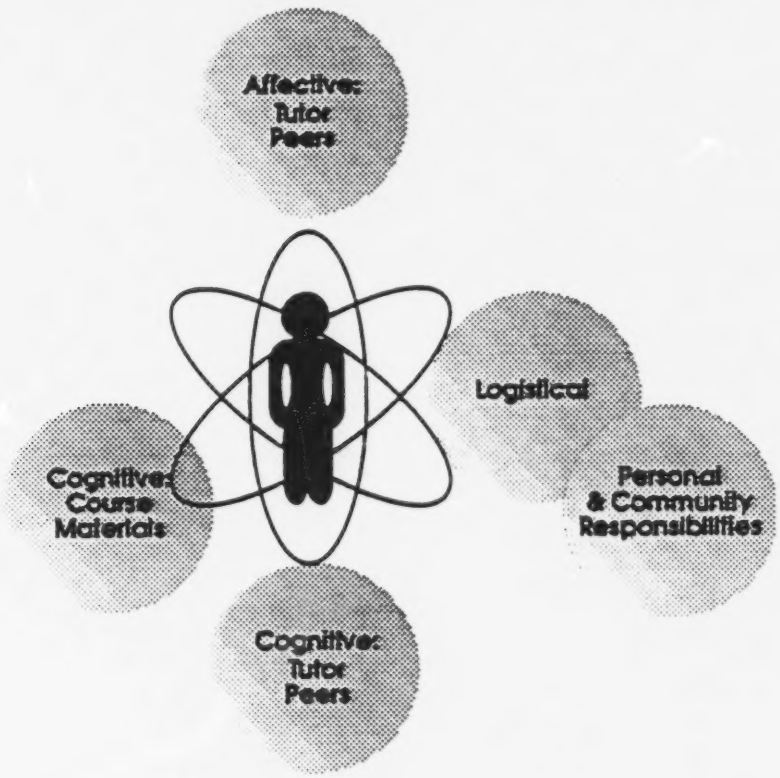


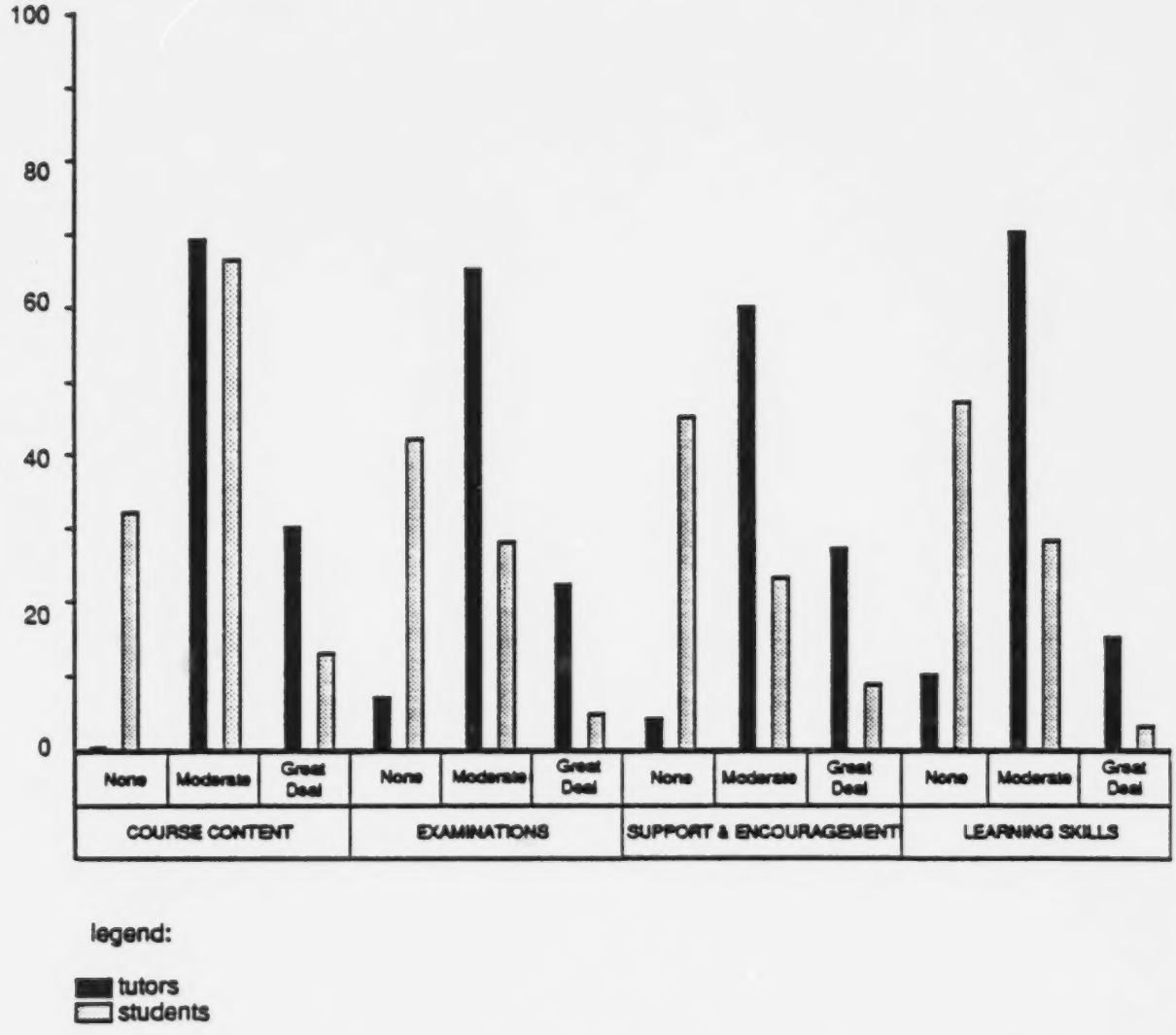
Figure 3. How key elements appear to interact



this study. The second difference related to the perceived quality of contact. Regarding the first difference, out of seven areas of tutor activity listed (see Appendix B.1), only one area - understand course content - received similar ratings from tutors and students, and then, the perceptions matched only at the "moderate" level of impact (Table 6, p. 58). In the other areas of impact - developing learning skills, applying new knowledge, sustaining self-confidence and morale, preparing for examinations, solving administrative problems and developing critical thinking skills - major differences were apparent, in some cases with a variance of 30 to 40 percent. Figure 4 below shows four of the activity areas and the different response rates for each group at three levels: "none", "moderate" and "a great deal". The differences in response levels to this question clearly indicate that the tutors think they are having a wider general impact at nearly all levels than their students think they are having. The student perceptions are especially noteworthy for the high levels of response at the "none" level across all activity areas.

The second major difference in perceptions related to perceived quality of contact. Many tutors believed that their students faced greater difficulties across a range of six learning - related activities than the students themselves reported. These were using course materials, completing assignments, accessing resource material, developing study skills, contacting and using support of other students, and finding enough time in the day. Only one area - contacting and using the support of the tutor - was assessed by the tutors to be less difficult than what was reported by students.

Figure 4. Some Differences in Perceptions of Tutors and Students



In fact, many students indicated little or no difficulty in the six activity areas. Qualitative data from a follow-up interview study would be needed to establish explanations for these differences in assessments, but we can at least offer some observations that have guided our recommendations. The differences in assessments of tutor impact may indicate that tutors assume they have more influence than is apparent to their adult students. If so, the assumptions may be made because the tutors are essentially out of touch with the ways in which busy (and often weary) adult students take pragmatic and managerial approaches to coping with their study load. Adult students may take the fastest and easiest route through their course and so "fit in" their tutor as they judge her/him to be useful. Most tutors may be used to dealing with visible, younger and full time students over a nine to five day; the invisible, older and part-time students who study at times snatched between 6:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. present different needs, attitudes and stress tolerances regarding how their precious time is used. If a tutor is regarded as one of the stressors in a course (because they are hard to reach, and because they grade and otherwise exercise power) then contact with that person/stressor may be limited, with the result that the tutor's impact may be reduced overall to the bare essentials.

The students' perceptions of experiencing little or no difficulty in using course materials in contrast to the tutors' assessments, may be explained in several ways. First, the course materials may be so well designed and matched to learner characteristics that indeed the students have a smooth passage through the course. Second, the students may not be seeing difficulties either because they lack the learning skills to be able to accurately assess the intended level of activity they must reach, or because their pragmatism guides than into a lower level approach to their studies in which they will be happy with a passing grade instead of an

honours grade, for example. We do not know about their study skills or their attitudes and must also recognise that the overall low levels of contact between student and tutor (and almost none among students themselves) may have conditioned our findings in more ways than we can assess.

5. Summary

It is appropriate to end our discussion with a summary of our positive findings and of some areas of concern in the current tutoring environment. First, we wish to recognise the good work that is being achieved by students, their tutors, and their institutions. Second, we believe that these strengths and concerns provide a useful context for the recommendations which follow in the next section.

The strengths - the positive aspects - relate to internal and external motivations. It is clear that adult learners bring strong commitment, self reliance and perseverance to their learning in spite of the conflicting demands of busy work and family lives. As Haag (1988) points out:

> Their lives are filled with conflicting demands, with those of their profession or job and of their families being regarded as more important than their own needs and interests in most cases. Since their learning is "for the self" and voluntary it must often give way to more urgent calls upon their energies. (This does not mean, incidentally, that they regard their learning activity as trivial or unimportant, but rather that their sacrifices in postponing or giving it up are all the more painful).

Adults also bring a wealth of experience to the learning task and a certain wisdom "which is the product of their intelligence acted upon by years of life experience [and which] can compensate in many cases for some deterioration in learning skills" (Haag 1988).

In the interpersonal domain, many students indicated that they felt the lack of peer contact as they worked through their courses. This desire for contact, rather than being seen as a negative element, or a lack in one's confidence in working alone, should be seen in a positive light as a natural adult desire to learn from the experiences of others. As Kirkup & Von Prümmer (1990) argue from their research results, expressions of desire to talk with and learn from class peers (connectedness) are strengths, not deficits. Peer contact could be used by course designers and tutors in the design of activities that help students learn together in order to share their load and use each other's experience.

Happily, students also feel somewhat positive in that they do not feel disadvantaged as distance students; rather they enjoy the time and place flexibility that their courses provide. Many tutors also feel very positive; they regard tutoring as essential to the distance learning process, and feel some satisfaction in their work with adult learners. A final positive element relates to both students and tutors; they have a wealth of experience about their work in distance education which should, if tapped, provide useful information for administrators and course designers to use in improving course designs. Our survey results indicate that both students and tutors would appreciate being asked regularly for feedback and creative suggestions that they know would be regarded seriously.

The areas of concern - the negative aspects - chiefly relate to perceived quality of contact, isolation, lack of affiliation, differences in perception, terminology, and tutor satisfaction. Students reported low levels of student-initiated contact with their tutor, lukewarm assessments of the overall quality of contact with their tutors, and strong perceptions that tutors are useful only at a moderate level - for cognitive, course related

questions, or assignments. In terms of the two fundamental adult behavioural drives of achievement and affiliation (Brundage & MacKeracher 1980), we believe that more strategies are being directed toward achievement, that is, successful completion of course requirements, than toward meeting the affiliation drives that promote effective and comfortable learning.

Two key elements arise from the reduced level of affiliation. The first is intellectual isolation. We have noted that many students have no contact with their tutor until the tutor has marked and returned the first assignment. This period of intellectual loneliness and delay in establishing social norms of interaction means that the student has to plunge ahead in isolation without early confirmation that she/he is doing things correctly. The second element, more problematic perhaps than the first, is the unspoken assumption that contact with the tutor, when not directly concerned with assignments, is driven by problems originating in the student. This approach assumes a "deficit model" in which the learner is expected to have problems and then admit to these problems by the act of contacting the tutor. This process implies taking risks with one's self-esteem that may not be acceptable to some students. The net result has been summarized well by an adult student in another context - this time a face-to-face classroom in an Ontario university not involved in our study: "The card [with the tutor's name] instructed me to contact him if I had any problems. Since I didn't want to admit to having problems, I never contacted him" (Foxx 1990:51).

The lack of peer contact was an impediment felt by a reasonable number of learners. This feeling should be no surprise, given the importance of peer contact when well designed. Such contact can give students access to more resources, organize a shared workload for projects, and promote

psychological gains for students of immediacy, inclusion, and covert, comparative checks of each student's progress and difficulties with peers.

The issue of terminology is a concern to us because of the powerful and covert effect of language on attitude formation and daily behaviour. The term "marker" was used by a significant proportion of student and tutor respondents to indicate the function of the tutor. This term limits our conceptual and practical understanding of how tutors should help adults learn (Haag 1990, Thorpe et al 1986, Cole et al 1986). Furthermore, the term does not do justice to the encouragement and support which some tutors appear to be giving their students. We indicated earlier that more students want encouragement than actually receive it. There were other students who indicated they wanted, but did not get, useful content - related comments as well as a grade and encouraging remarks. We agree with the following instructions to distance tutors:

> Your role extends beyond the traditional understanding of marking... your active teaching of individual students, the kind of activity that traditionally takes place in tutorials or seminars, will be transposed into a written form... Your primary goal... should be to promote the learning of each student. (Open Teaching 1988:66).

The final area of concern is tutor satisfaction. The issue of job satisfaction for tutors is an important one, especially when they are "gypsy" tutors who work as a tutor part time and may have very low levels of involvement with their host institution (Goldberg 1983). If, as our tutors have reported, the grading of papers and assignments is their major function, yet grading is what they least like doing, then how can their work be made more enjoyable? We must ensure that the tutors take action so that assignments are as productive as possible for themselves

and their students, without loss of academic rigor, but also without the burden of everyone feeling that assignments are busy work to prove students have read their material.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, we present a framework which incorporates a model for the future and some specific recommendations. The framework is concerned with the desired quality of the students' and tutors' experience, and their relationship to the institution.

1. A framework and model for the future

We are suggesting that an appropriate framework is one that takes a learner-centred view, with appropriate care for the tutor's feelings and rewards, within the general principles of helping adults learn. There is already an extensive body of literature on these topics for educators working in both visual and virtual classrooms. The challenge now for those in the growing field of distance education is to raise the reasonable expectations of effective tutoring, and hence student satisfaction, to a level that is both qualitatively new and sustainable. This raising of expectations and improvement in experience has to occur in two distance education contexts; one in which the student's progress through a course is paced by certain institutionally-imposed deadlines, and one in which it is not. Some of our recommendations concerning interpersonal activity will be much easier to implement in the first context because students will be working at similar stages and therefore will be able to work collaboratively.

There are two major approaches to enhancing the profile of the tutor. The first way is through an overall course design that substantively increases interactions between the tutor and the students. Such a design

would place more emphasis than is now present on the "dialogue" aspects of learning that are so important for adult students. Until fairly recently these aspects were not attended to, either because the interactive technologies were just not available or because distance educators were more concerned with the "delivery" (the production of course materials and the delivery of written assignment feedback). The student was given detailed instructions for working alone through these materials and tutors/markers were assigned to ensure that students were fulfilling their written assignments. Now, however, with the increasingly easy access to telephones and computers, and with the fact that many distance mode students actually live in areas of high population density, there are fewer excuses for leaving the distance student to work alone, with only limited feedback after she/he sends in assignments to be graded.

The second way to enhance the tutor profile lies in the designs for learning that are carried in course materials. In the new styles of contemporary distance learning, with real and delayed time interaction technologies, there are more opportunities to create course designs that promote an important proactive role for the tutor that goes beyond mere grading of papers. These new course designs may also promote significant and beneficial dialogical roles for student peers, in that many mature students not only value each other's experience, but often need peer support to help them both analyze that experience and integrate new learnings into their existing knowledge structure. Dialogue, as distinct from lecturing, may occur in various forms, negotiating, enquiring, confirming or narrating.

At the same time, audio and computer conferencing and occasional face-to-face meetings (such as weekend workshops, residential schools, or on-site visits), can allow for small and large group tutorials that integrate

functionally with the "alone" studying that students carry out at home. This mixed mode approach is increasingly being used in Canada (Burge & Howard 1990a) but has a longer history in Britain and Australia. Where a course is paced, that is, the students have a limited time period to complete the course (as in a traditional face-to-face course), group work is easier to synchronize because everyone is working to the same schedule of course topics and can therefore focus on the same work. However, when courses are not paced so thoroughly, there should be opportunities and reason to connect students and connect students and tutor.

Figure 5 illustrates our proposal for a new configuration of the place of the tutor in the distance learning equation. In the proposed model, closer links are evident between all participants; between learners themselves; between the tutor and the institution, the course supervisor, and with other learners. The strong link between tutor and individual student would remain unchanged because of grading and reporting requirements. If the interaction dynamics were to change in this way, expanding to include contact with other learners and strengthening existing but sometimes tenuous lines of contact, then the potential for shared, satisfactory communication would increase dramatically.

Figure 6 illustrates the increased interaction of elements from the learner's point of view. Our proposed interaction of elements affecting distance learners shows interaction and stronger connections between the learner and her/his affective and cognitive resources and logistical arrangements. In a strengthened configuration such as this, the learner's cognitive domain would broaden to include input not only from course materials, but also from the tutor and from discussion with other learners. The learner's affective needs could be met by relationships

Figure 5. Recommended place of tutor in distance learning relationships

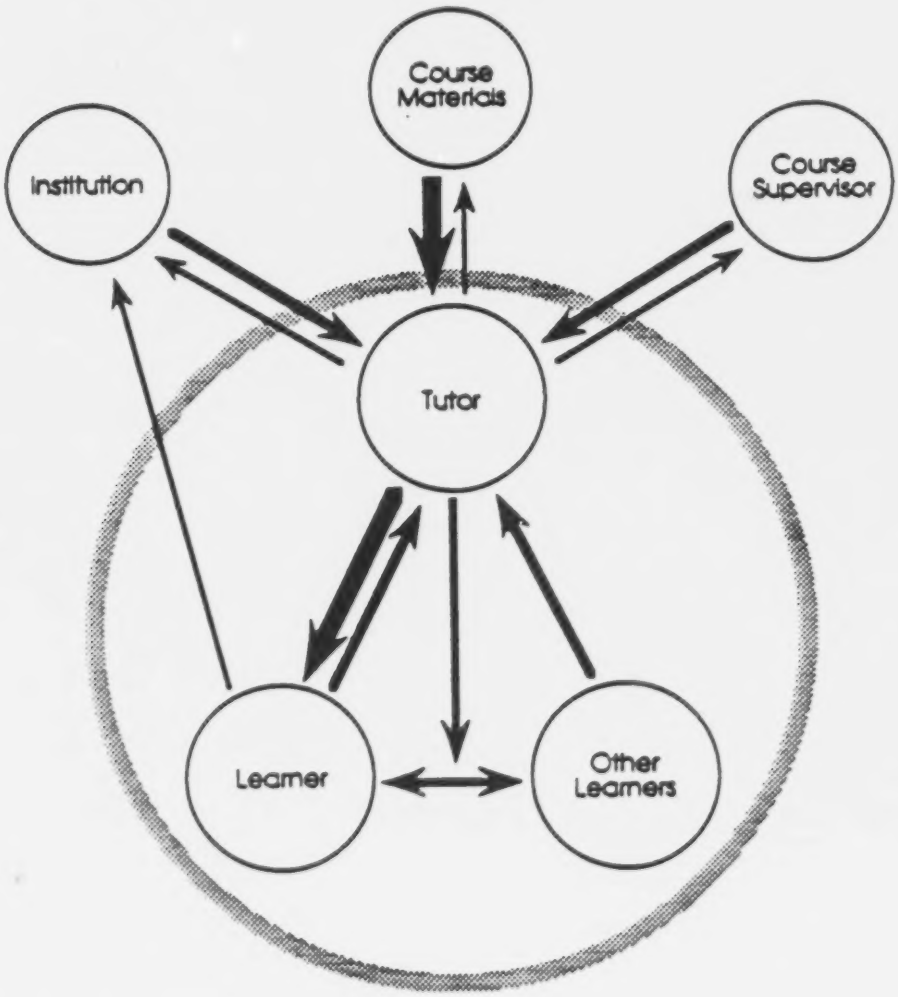
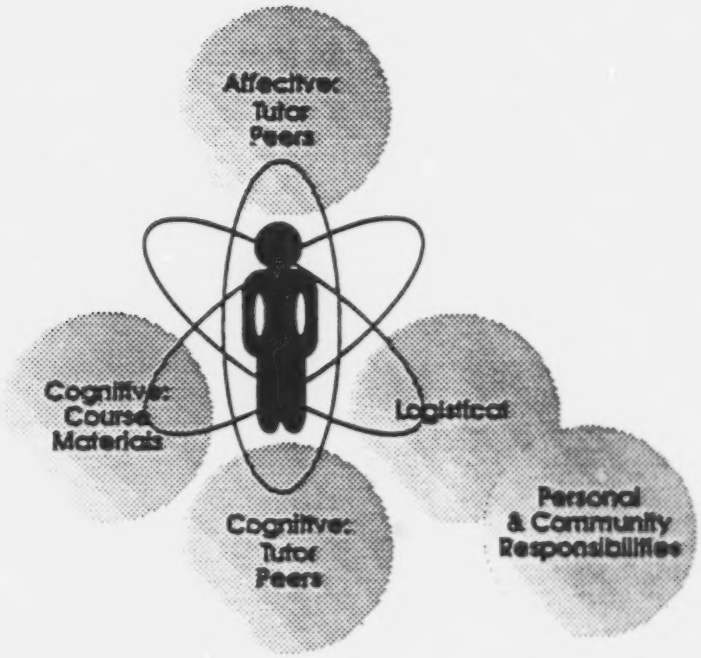


Figure 6. How key elements ideally could interact



with the tutor and with other learners and the logistical elements might be more readily dealt with due to the increased communication in all domains.

In the proposed configuration, if one element began to have an unusually strong impact, then the others would be connected well enough with the learner so that disruptive forces would be minimized. Overall, this dynamic equilibrium is a delicate one, not just because of how the different elements would act and react but also because of how the perceptions held by the various players would influence their actions.

2. Recommendations

We organize our recommendations in two main groups:

- Recommendations affecting the tutors' role and work
- Recommendations affecting institutional practice.

A. Recommendations affecting the tutors' role and work

The place of the tutor would be enhanced if the following specific recommendations were adopted:

1. Establish a clear set of role expectations and monitoring procedures to ensure that adequate tutor preparation is carried out and tutors are given adequate support and resources during the course.

2. Ensure that every student is given an explanation of the tutor's role and responsibilities and how these match with the student's responsibilities, expectations and needs.

3. Ensure that each tutor, especially the novice, has an on-site training session that is linked to the explanations in the learner's manual of the role and responsibilities of both tutor

and student. Training should be designed to help tutors recognise ways in which adult learners may experience contextual stresses that inhibit or adversely affect their learning, and to develop ways they can make allowance for such difficulty (for example, "no penalty" clauses for late assignments), without fearing a loss of academic integrity.

4. Use the results of such surveys as ours and those of Athabasca University, the Open University (UK), and Télé-université to enable tutors to "hear" from students about their preferences, needs and resources for learning, and what they value and do not value about tutor activity and skills.

5. Avoid the use of the term "marker" and adopt a broader and more positive term such as tutor which deliberately indicates that helping adults learn is more than grading papers and marking examinations.

6. Examine the function and number of assignments and examinations in order to ensure that student are not doing "busy work", and that tutors do not have a dysfunctionally large load of papers which cannot be returned quickly. Whenever possible, allow the tutor to design assignments that meet the criteria of integration and cumulation, not repetition.

7. Give tutors affective feedback when their good work is evident. Do not use the deficit model with tutors, that is, communicate with them only when things go wrong.

8. Have the tutors ask students in the early stages of the course how the tutors may best help them. Again, at the end of the course, involve the tutor in the evaluation of the course, by contributing a few additional questions to the questionnaire, for example.

9. Ensure that all tutors have access to a mentor tutor so that consultation around insoluble or difficult problems can take place.

10. Compensate tutors quite specifically for their interpersonal communications with students that go beyond the basic marking function, for example, ensure adequate budgetary resources to allow the tutor to place long distance telephone calls to students. Build in this 'connecting' activity as part of the legitimate work load of the tutor.

B. Recommendations affecting institutional practice

11. Make it as easy as possible technically for students to communicate with each other during a course so that they receive the supportive peer contact so many now miss. At a basic level, share addresses and telephone numbers among those who agree to this information transfer.

12. In logistical terms, ensure that communication norms and procedures are set up which make it easy for students to contact their tutor at their time of greatest need (and not three days later or just from 9 to 5). Toll-free telephone lines, telephone answering machines, electronic mail and student friendly hours for guaranteed contact are feasible but not

always implemented procedures for reliable and speedy communication.

13. Try to organize at least one significant face-to-face event during a course, structured and planned so that both intellectual and emotional needs are addressed and so that students and tutors feel at the end of the event that they have achieved something worthwhile.

14. In a paced course, where all students are working simultaneously on the same topics, regular and structured "class" meetings could occur, either by telephone or computer conferencing. Such group meetings should be carefully planned so that their cognitive and affective objectives are integrated with those set for the work done alone by a student prior to the group event.

15. In a non-paced course, ensure that every tutor places a "get to know you" call to the student at the beginning of the course. Later in the course, help students and tutor to assess how the communications procedures are working out. Use a mid-course student feedback instrument to capture successes and problems.

16. Ensure that students and tutors exchange appropriate autobiographical information at the start of each course.

17. Examine ways in which the tutor may feel more importance and inclusion in the whole enterprise. This issue is addressed, in fact, in many of our recommendations that emphasize the value of the tutor's experience and its usefulness in course improvement processes.

18. During the course, collect ongoing feedback from tutors about how they are spending their time, how they feel about their work, and improvements they suggest to the course and/or the tutoring process.

A Final Note

We feel it is now time to qualitatively expand our concern for the whole issue of mediation in learning and reconsider how a tutor could best help and nurture a learner through all the cognitive and affective stages of a distance course. By implementing the recommendations above, the university could help the tutor to become a warm proactive figure in the learner's landscape, and not just a shadowy entity who grades on demand. The new style tutor would bring new definitions to the concepts of achievement and affiliation, dialogue and delivery. The tutor would respond to the "connection imperative" - that driving force that encourages adults to connect with people and resources in order to solve problems and move ahead with their learning task. Recognition of this drive to affiliate in order to feel achievement should result in changed status and responsibilities for the tutors. The tutors, we believe, are the crucial link for the whole distance learning enterprise.

TABLES

Table 1: Number of Surveys Sent and Returned

	Sent	Returned	%
Tutors	205	84	41.0
Students	1040	447	43.0

Table 2: Breakdown of Student Sample by Institution

	Sent	Returned	%
University of Guelph	160	59	36.9
Laurentian University	210	102	48.6
Queen's University	170	66	38.8
Waterloo University	500	220	49.0

Table 3: The Importance of Four Goals in the Decision to Tutor

	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	N/A
a) to fulfil assigned teaching responsibilities	17.1	6.1	43.9	32.9
b) to gain academic experience	28.9	15.7	50.6	4.8
c) to earn an income	34.2	0.	63.4	2.4
d) to work with students	14.7	20.7	61.0	3.7

Table 4: Tutor Assessments of Key Skills for a Tutor

Skill Area	Tutor Response
1. Having adequate subject knowledge	86.7
2. Being able to communicate the course content	77.4
3. Being available for advice or help	50.0
4. Being understanding about student problems	47.0
5. Having applied/practical experience	33.8
6. Understanding administrative procedures	6.2
7. Having technical expertise with communications technology	3.6

Table 5: Comparison of Tutor and Student Assessments of Key Tutor Skills

	Tutors' beliefs about student assessments	Students' actual assessments
1. Communicating content clearly	78.3	89.3
2. Subject knowledge	69.8	90.1
3. Being understanding about problems	65.9	15.5
4. Being available for advice or help	65.1	51.5
5. Applied/practical experience	22.0	53.7
6. Understanding administrative procedures	7.4	3.9
7. Technical expertise	2.6	8.1

Table 6: Differences in Perception by Tutors and Students of the Impact of Tutoring

	None		Some to Moderate		A Great Deal	
	T	S	T	S	T	S
a. Acquire learning/study skills	9.6	46.7	69.8	27.6	14.5	3.2
b. Understand course content	0.0	31.6	68.7	66.7	28.9	13.3
c. Apply new knowledge to practical situations	7.3	43.3	62.2	26.5	18.3	8.4
d. Develop/sustain self-confidence and morale	3.7	45.2	59.8	23.3	26.8	9.4
e. Prepare for exams	7.2	42.3	65.1	28.5	21.7	5.4
f. Solve administrative problems	35.8	53.6	50.6	15.7	7.4	3.2
g. Develop critical thinking skills	2.4	39.4	65.1	31.4	26.5	8.0

Table 7: Level of Difficulty Estimated by Tutors and Reported by Students

	None or Little Difficulty		Moderate Difficulty		Difficult or Very Difficult	
	T	S	T	S	T	S
a. Using course materials	55.4	82.7	25.3	14.2	14.3	2.9
b. Understanding/completing assigments	36.9	62.5	26.2	25.4	35.7	12.0
c. Finding resource material	30.2	54.0	25.3	20.6	35.0	21.7
d. Developing study skills	11.9	61.1	26.2	20.2	47.6	17.5
e. Contacting using support of tutor	50.0	41.6	25.0	10.3	20.2	17.1
f. Contacting/using support of other students	7.2	23.5	14.3	6.0	57.1	31.5
g. Finding enough time in the day	0.0	20.8	2.4	2O.4	42.9	67.3

Table 8: Methods of Contact During the Course as Reported by Tutors and Students

	Never/Rarely		Sometimes		Often	
	T	S	T	S	T	S
a. [Tutor telephones] each student on own initiative	77.7	89.0	10.5	1.8	5.3	0.0
b. [Tutor responds] to student requests	2.6	50.5	18.8	16.1	70.0	8.3
c. [Tutor sets] aside specific hours each week for students to call	50.0	15.8	5.1	21.0	26.9	48.1
d. [Tutor contacts] students through written comments on assignments	2.4	8.5	6.1	12.2	89.0	72.6
e. [Tutor writes] students via computer E-mail	88.3	56.5	0.0	2.4	0.0	1.9
f. [Tutor arranges] face-to-face meetings	79.2	71.5	4.1	1.6	2.6	1.6

Table 9: Frequency of Contact as Reported by Tutors and Students

	Tutors	Students
Once every 6-8 weeks	22.2	86.4
Once a month	45.7	8.9
Once every 2 weeks	29.6	3.6
Once a week	2.5	1.1

Table 10: Average Time for Return of Assignments as Reported by Tutors and Students

	Tutor	Students
Within 1 week	63.1	
Within 2 weeks	33.3	17.4
Within 3 weeks	3.6	35.0
Within 4 weeks		34.7
More than 4 weeks		13.0

Table 11: Reasons for Student-initiated Contact with Tutors

	Never	Rarely/ Sometimes	Often
A. General			
1. Ask questions on general academic or administrative procedures	62.1	37.1	1.8
2. Ask questions on course requirements	62.8	33.7	2.9
3. Question grades assigned	79.0	19.5	0.2
B. Course-specific			
4. Request a change in course format or order of activities	89.2	9.9	0.
5. Request a change in content of activities/assignments	93.5	6.1	0.
6. Request an extension of time	67.9	30.1	1.8
7. Question course content, text, study notes	66.5	31.9	0.9
8. Ask for clarification of tutor's comments	75.8	22.3	0.9
9. Ask for help in searching for research materials	81.9	16.7	0.7
10. Ask for help in preparing assignments, papers	77.4	20.7	1.4
11. Ask for help preparing for exams	81.5	17.1	0.7
C. Interpersonal			
12. Discuss family, financial, employment problems	95.0	4.7	0.
13. Discuss, clarify learning goals	93.0	6.6	0.2
14. Discuss academic progress	88.2	11.6	0.
15. Discuss basic learning/study skills	95.0	4.7	0.
16. Seek encouragement, moral support	90.3	9.0	0.5

Table 12: Student Assessments of the Help Provided by Tutoring

Student Activity	Not at all	Some/ moderate	A great deal	Cannot say
1. Acquire study skills	46.7	27.6	3.2	22.6
2. Understand course content	31.6	66.7	13.3	20.0
3. Apply new knowledge	43.3	26.5	8.4	21.8
4. Sustain/develop confidence	45.2	23.3	9.4	22.2
5. Prepare for exams	42.3	28.5	5.4	23.8
6. Develop critical thinking	39.4	31.4	8.0	21.2
7. Solve administrative problems	53.6	15.7	3.2	27.5
8. Other	44.8	1.5	2.9	50.7

Table 13: Where Tutor Help Is Most Wanted by Students

1. Acquire study skills	16.4
2. Understand course content	51.0
3. Apply new knowledge	21.5
4. Sustain/develop confidence	20.2
5. Prepare for exams	41.0
6. Develop critical thinking	25.5
7. Solve administrative problems	10.9
8. Other	6.0

Table 14: Methods of Student-Tutor Contact During the Course

	Never/ Rarely	Some-times	Often	Not Ap-plicable
a. Tutor phones student	89.0	1.8	9.2	9.2
b. Student requests help	50.5	16.1	8.3	25.0
c. Tutor available specific hours	15.8	21.0	48.1	15.1
d. Written comments on assignments	8.5	12.2	72.6	6.6
e. Via E-mail	56.5	2.4	1.9	39.2
f. Audio conferences	47.9	3.8	6.6	41.8
g. Face-to-face as needed	71.5	1.6	1.6	25.2

Table 15: Assessments of the Quality of Tutor-Student Contacts

	Very Frustrated				Very Satisfied
	1	2	3	4	5
Tutor	7.3	22.0	36.6	24.4	9.8
Students	10.2	15.2	38.2	18.1	17.8

Table 16: Type of Feedback Wanted and Feedback Received

	What Students Want	What Students Get
a. A grade only	2.0	12.1
b. A grade + grammar comment	1.8	6.0
c. A grade + grammar + content comment	20.8	47.3
d. A grade + grammar + content + encouragement	74.8	31.3

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

A.1 Tutor Questionnaire with Percentage Results

A.2 Coding Instructions for Tutor Questionnaire

SURVEY OF TUTOR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN MEDIATING FOR DISTANCE LEARNING

TUTOR SURVEY

51.8 48.2

1. Gender: Male [_] Female [_]

2. Age group: 20-29 [_] 30-39 [_] 40-49 [_] 50-59 [_] 60 + [_]
   29.8 27.4 22.6 9.5 10.7

3. Level of education completed:

[_]	Community	22.6	[_]	University degree	
[_]	Business/technical college	71.4	[_]	Post graduate degree (e.g. MA, PhD, MBA)	(incl. post graduate students)
[_]	Nursing diploma		[_]	Other professional credential (e.g. CMA,	
6.0 [_]	Some university			RIA, CA)	

4. Employment status in the institution.

33.7 [_]	Permanent faculty	3.6	[_]	Extramural instructor	
				(Retired/volunteer	4.8
6.0 [_]	Sessional faculty	56.6	[_]	Other (specify) (occasional instructor	8.4
				(Ph.D. student	43.4

5. Are you currently employed other than as a distance education tutor? Yes [_] No [_]
   66.3 33.7

6. What is the primary location from which you do your tutoring?
   Home [_] Institution [_] Work place [_]
   60.2 31.3 8.4

7. At present, approximately how many distance courses do you tutor? (1 course 65.1 (2 courses 32.5 (3 courses 2.4

8. How may distance students do you tutor? 1-10 (8.4) 11-25 (21.7) 26-50 (37.3) 51-100 (18.1) 100+ (14.5)

9. How many hours per week do you spend on tutoring and related activities (marking, preparation, advising)? _____ 1-5 (42.0) 6-10 (38.3) 11-15 (11.1) 16-20 (3.7) 20+ (4.9)

10. What is the usual time period allocated for the distance courses you tutor?
    No limit [_] 3-4 months [_] 6-8 months [_] 12 months [_]
    2.4 72.6 21.4 3.6

11. How many years have you been a distance education tutor?
    1 year or less [_] 2-3 years [_] 4-6 years [_] 6 years or more [_]
    37.3 18.1 13.3 31.3

12. Please indicate how important each of the following goals were to you in your decision to become or continue as a distance education tutor:

	Not Important				Very important	N/A
	1	2	3	4	5	6
a) to fulfil my assigned teaching responsibilities	15.9	1.2	6.1	13.4	30.5	32.9
b) to gain academic experience	24.1	4.8	15.7	19.3	31.3	4.8
c) to earn an income	18.3	15.9	0	14.6	48.8	2.4
d) to work with students	11.0	3.7	20.7	25.6	35.4	3.7
e) other (specify) _____						

YOUR ROLE AS A TUTOR

13. What do you think are the most important skills in any distance tutor? Rank in order of importance from 1 to 7, giving #1 to the most important.

	#1	2	3
(a) having adequate subject knowledge	55	19	12
(b) having applied/practical experience	2	15	17
(c) being able to communicate the course content clearly	26	31	20
(d) being understanding about student problems	8	15	24
(e) understanding administrative procedures	1	3	3
(f) being available for advice or help	13	17	20
(g) having technical expertise with communications technology	0	1	2

14. Estimate how much of your total tutoring time is spent on the activities listed blow.

	None	Less than 25%	25-50%	50-75%	More than 75%	Can't say
a) course administration (scheduling exams, obtaining missing materials)	50.0	42.9	4.8	0	0	2.4
b) course materials (revising, adapting, preparing activities/test items)	31.7	41.5	22.0	2.4	1.2	1.2
c) marking papers and assignments	0	9.5	8.3	28.6	53.6	0
d) contact about course content	10.8	73.5	7.2	2.4	1.2	4.8
e) contact for counselling, advice and encouragement (learning strategies, coping skills)	12.0	73.5	4.8	1.2	3.6	4.8

15. Regardless of what the institution expects of you, how much time do you think you <u>should spend</u> on the activities listed below?

	None	25%	25-50%	50-75%	More than 75%	Can't say
a) cours administration	48.8	40.5	3.6	0	0	7.1
b) course materials	22.6	38.1	26.2	7.1	2.4	3.6
c) marking papers and assignments	1.2	9.5	33.3	29.8	26.2	0
d) contact about course content	4.8	59.5	22.6	3.6	1.2	8.3
(e) contact for counselling, advice and encouragement	4.9	62.2	20.7	2.4	3.7	6.1

16. What do you think ***your students*** consider to be the most important skills in any distance tutor? Prioritize the list below giving #1 to the most important.

		#1	2	3	Total
(a) subject knowledge	[_]	37.3	21.7	10.8	**69.8**
(b) applied/practical experience	[_]	3.7	7.3	11.0	22.0
(c) communicating content clearly	[_]	36.1	20.5	21.7	78.3
(d) being understanding about problems	[_]	9.8	31.7	24.4	65.9
(e) understanding administrative procedures	[_]	1.2	6.2	0	7.4
(f) being available for advice or help	[_]	22.9	15.7	26.5	65.1
(g) technical expertise	[_]	1.3	1.3	0	2.6

17. Estimate the level of difficulty your students face in the following areas:

	Not difficult				Very difficult	Can't say
	1	2	3	4	5	6
a) using course materials	22.9	32.5	25.3	13.3	1.2	4.8
b) understanding/completing assignments	8.3	28.6	26.2	28.6	7.1	1.2
c) finding resource material	14.5	15.7	25.3	21.7	13.3	9.6
d) developing study skills	2.4	9.5	26.2	34.5	13.1	14.3
(e) contacting/using support of tutor	25.0	25.0	25.0	11.9	8.3	4.8
(f) contacting/using support of other students	2.4	4.8	14.3	19.0	38.1	21.4
(g) finding enough time in the day	0	0	2.4	14.3	28.6	26.2

(h) other _____

18. Do you think your tutoring has an impact on the following student activities?

		None	A little	A moderate amount	A great deal	Can't say
(a)	acquire learning/study skills	9.6	34.9	34.9	14.5	6.0
(b)	understand course content	0	19.3	49.4	28.9	2.4
(c)	apply new knowledge to practical situations	7.3	35.4	26.8	18.3	12.2
(d)	develop/sustain self-confidence and morale	3.7	18.3	41.5	26.8	9.8
(e)	prepare for exams	7.2	25.3	39.8	21.7	6.0
(f)	solve administrative problems	35.8	37.0	13.6	7.4	6.2
(g)	develop critical thinking skills	2.4	21.7	43.4	26.5	6.0
(h)	other _____					

19. Which aspects of your tutoring do you enjoy the most?

_____

_____

_____

20. Which aspects do you least enjoy?

_____

_____

_____

21. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree	Can't say
	1	2	3	4	5	6
a) The studies of adult learners are adversely affected by the demands of home, family and work responsibilities.	1.2 [_]	7.2 [_]	26.5 [_]	22.9 [_]	41.0 [_]	1.2 [_]
b) The impact of home, family and work responsibilities is the same for men and women as they progress through a course.	33.7 [_]	21.7 [_]	12.0 [_]	10.8 [_]	9.6 [_]	12.0 [_]

21. Continued...

	Strongly disagree 1	2	3	4	Strongly agree 5	Can't say 6
c) A student's individual situation (family life, time or money constraints) is not relevant to the tutor-learner relationship	44.0	21.4	17.9	6.0	9.5	1.2
d) Students should tell their tutors about home, family or work situations that affect their studies.	6.0	12.0	15.7	32.5	31.3	2.4
e) A tutor should be willing to take into account the home, family or work situation that affects a student's progress.	4.8	10.8	16.9	30.1	36.1	1.2
f) The institution cannot be expected to be flexible in its regulations to take into account the home, family or work situations of distance students.	44.6	14.5	18.1	10.8	10.8	1.2

CONTACT WITH STUDENTS

22. Do you give autobiographical information to the distance students you tutor? Yes 69.0 ☐ No 31.0 ☐

23. Is the role of the tutor explained to the students? Yes 86.1 ☐ No 13.9 ☐ If yes, how?

58.6 [_] the institution gave an explanation in course materials

34.3 [_] I explained on my own initiative

7.1 [_] the institution required me to give and explanation

[_] other _____

24. Which of the following statements best describes the initial formal contact you had with your students?

7.1 [_] the institution organized a face-to-face meeting

81.0 [_] my first contact was through written comments on the first assignment

3.6 [_] the institution required that I contact each student

19.0 [_] the students contacted me on their inititiatve

4.8 [_] on my own initiative I contacted each student

[_] other (specify) {letter 7.1, phone 2.4, tutorial tape 7.1}

25 How does subsequent contact take place between you and your students?

		Never	Rarely	Some-times	Often	N/A
(a)	I telephone each student on my own initiative	63.2	14.5	10.5	5.3	6.6
(b)	I respond to student-initiated requests	1.3	1.3	18.8	70.0	8.8
(c)	I set aside specific hours each week for students to call me	46.2	3.8	5.1	26.9	17.9
(d)	I contact students through written comments on assignments	1.2	1.2	6.1	89.0	2.4
(e)	I write students via computer E-mail	85.7	2.6	0	0	11.7
(f)	I arrange face-to-face meetings	57.1	22.1	9.1	2.6	9.1
(g)	other _____					

26. How often, on average, are you in contact with each of your distance students?

(a)	Once every 6-8 weeks	[_]	22.2
(b)	Once a month	[_]	45.7
(c)	Once every 2 weeks	[_]	29.6
(d)	Once a week	[_]	2.5

27 How do you feel, in general, about the quality of the contact you have with your distance students?

Very frustrated				Very satisfied
1	2	3	4	5
7.3	22.0	36.6	24.4	9.8
[_]	[_]	[_]	[_]	[_]

28. When do you generally try to give students feedback on assignments?

63.1	[_] within 1 week	3.6	[_] within 3 weeks
33.3	[_] within 2 weeks		[_] other _____

29. What kind of response to do you most regularly give students on their written assignments?

[_] a grade

[_] a grade with comments on grammar and syntax only

[_] a grade with content-related comments (i.e. identifying interesting or important points made)

[_] a grade with content-related comments plus encouragement

[_] other _____

30. How do you usually return your students' work?

20.2	[_] regular mail	1.2	[_]	courier service
4.8	[_] Priority Post	73.8	[_]	via distance education co-ordinator
	[_] other _____	96.4		3.6

31. Are you satisfied with this method of return? Yes ☐ No ☐

If not, why? _____

32. How often, if at all, do you communicate with others at the institution, either in person, by telephone, by written office memo or by electronic mail?

	Never	Some-times	Often
(a) other tutors	38.0	62.0	0
(b) distance education coordinator	11.0	87.8	1.2
(c) other _____			

33. Would you like these contacts to be more or less frequent?

	More frequent	Same	Less Frequent	Don't Care
(a) other tutors	16.0	54.3	2.5	27.2
(b) distance education coordinator	8.6	71.6	1.2	18.5

34. How often, if ever, do you receive feedback on your tutoring?

	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Often
(a) from students	1	2	3	4
(b) from the institution	1	2	3	4

35. To what extent is this feedback useful?

	Not at all useful 1	2	3	4	Very useful 5
a) from students	[_]	[_]	[_]	[_]	[_]
b) from the institution	[_]	[_]	[_]	[_]	[_]

36. Did you receive any kind of training or preparation for your role as a tutor?

		Yes	No
a)	informal help/briefing from other tutors	|_| 57.9	|_| 42.1
b)	written documentation	|_| 71.6	|_| 28.4
c)	meeting with distance education coordinator	|_| 57.7	|_| 42.3
d)	training session at the institution	|_| 58.2	|_| 41.8

37. Does the institution seek feedback from you on any training or additional support that you feel you need to perform your job more effectively? Yes = 45.6 No = 54.4

If yes, how does the institution gather your feedback?

Informally (67.6) By Surveys/questionnaires (11.8) At Seminars (20.6)

38. To what extent would your tutoring benefit from training or support in the following areas?

	Not at all				A great deal	Can't say
	1	2	3	4	5	6
a) revising/adapting materials	24.7	7.4	22.2	14.8	16.0	14.8
b) marking and grading	24.1	22.8	16.5	13.9	16.5	6.3
c) counselling and advising	22.5	21.3	18.8	18.8	13.8	5.0
d) interpersonal communications skills	26.6	19.0	20.3	13.9	12.7	7.6
e) working with adult learners	16.3	17.5	18.8	26.2	17.5	3.8
f) use of communications technologies	25.0	15.0	15.0	15.0	11.3	18.8

39. Indicate how useful the following types of training/feedback would be for your

	Not useful				Very useful	Can't say
	1	2	3	4	5	6
a) informal help from experienced tutors	17.3	17.3	14.8	19.8	22.2	8.6
b) in-service training workshops/ courses	21.0	18.5	28.4	11.1	16.0	4.9
c) critical feedback from students	1.2	9.6	16.9	21.7	48.2	2.4

40. Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding distance learning. Circle the number on the scale from 1 to 5 that best approximates your answer.

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5
(a) When it comes to helping people learn, distance education tutoring is exactly the same as teaching in the classroom.	57.1	28.6	6.0	3.6	4.8
(b) Tutoring is an essential element of distance learning.	1.2	3.6	9.6	28.9	56.6
(c) My work as a distance tutor has helped me improve my general teaching skills.	7.2	10.8	25.3	31.3	25.3
(e) I find distance education tutoring a frustrating experience.	31.0	23.8	26.2	14.3	4.8

41. Do you have any final comments?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!

Coding Instructions for Open-Ended Questions in Tutor Questionnaire

Question

12e) Other:

1 Program needs
2 Interest, develop materials
3 Reach students

19 Aspects most enjoyed:

1 Personal time flexibility
2 Student contact
3 Student diversity
4 Provide support, motivate, encourage
5 Successful learning
6 Student work (assignments, papers)
7 Content, feedback

20 Aspects least enjoyed:

1 Administration
2 Preparing materials
3 Assessment in general
4 Marking overload
5 Lack of contact with students
6 Poor quality student work
7 Student problems
8 Lack of incentive, institutional support

24 Other:

1 letter
2 telephone
3 tutorial help

37 Feedback:

1 Seminars
2 Evaluation surveys, questionnaires
3 Informal, self-initiated

41 General comments

1 Positive - works well, good for students
2 Negative - poor support, training, low priority
3 Marker only, not responsible for course
4 Support framework important (materials, administration)
5 Lack of contact a problem
6 More contact needed
7 Technology - important to use
9 Miscellaneous comments not directly related to tutoring function

APPENDIX B

B.1 Student Questionnaire with Percentage Results

B.2 Coding Instructions for Student Questionnaire

A SURVEY OF TUTOR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN MEDIATING FOR DISTANCE LEARNING

STUDENT SURVEY

---

1. Name (Optional) _____

2. Male ☐ 25.3 Female ☐ 74.7

3. City/town of residence
   1. Same/other univ. town 35.5
   2. Southern Ontario 40.0
   3. Northern Ontario 19.6
   4. Out of province/country 4.9

4. Institution in which you are enrolled
   1. Laurentian 22.9
   2. Guelph 13.3
   3. Queens 15.1
   4. Waterloo 48.7

5. Course/subject area _____

6. Level/year of program
   1 ☐ 29.3 2 ☐ 29.7 3 ☐ 30.6 4 ☐ 8.8 (Post grad. or certificate programs)

7. Age group:
   under 20 ☐ 1.8 20-29 ☐ 33.4 30-39 ☐ 36.5 40-49 ☐ 23.2 50-59 ☐ 3.6 60+ ☐ 1.6

8. Are you presently employed?

Full-time	(_) 61.1	Not employed	(_) 15.1
Part-time	(_) 17.3	Other (Co-op student, retired)	(_) 6.4

9. Approximately how far do you live from the institution in which you are enrolled? _____km

10. a) How many distance courses are you currently taking?

0	1	2	3
1.8	70.0	21.3	6.9

b) How many distance courses have you taken in total?

0	1-2	3-5	6-10	11+
7.7	29.3	30.2	14.9	17.8

11. Have you ever taken university-level courses in a traditional classroom situation?

Yes	No
74.4	25.6

12. Why are you taking this course via distance mode?
    1. Work schedule (+family) 30.5
    2. Distance availability 23.5
    3. Academic credit 15.8
    4. Family responsibilities 11.5
    5. Interest 2.7
    6. Personal learning style 8.1

THE TUTOR AND THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

13 Students studying at a distance try to contact the tutor for a variety of reasons. Estimate how often, if ever, you have contacted, or tried to contact your tutor for each of the following reasons. Circle the number from 1 to 5 that best approximates your answer.

	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Often	Can't say
A. General					
1 Ask questions on general academic or administrative regulations and procedures	61.2	23.3	13.8	1.8	0
2 Ask questions on course requirements	62.8	19.9	13.8	2.9	0.7
3 Question grades assigned	79.0	12.9	6.6	0.2	1.4
B. Course-specific					
4 Request a change in course format or order of activities	89.2	7.2	2.7	0	0.9
5 Request a change in content of activities/ assignments	93.5	5.0	1.1	0	0.5
6 Request an extension of time	67.9	19.2	10.9	1.8	0.2
7 Question course content, text, study notes	66.5	20.1	11.8	0.9	0.7
8 Ask for clarification of tutor's comments	75.8	12.6	9.7	0.9	0.9
9 Ask for help in searching for research materials	81.9	12.2	4.5	0.9	0.5
10 Ask for help in preparing assignments, papers	77.4	12.6	8.1	1.4	0.5
11 Ask for help preparing for exams	81.5	11.7	5.4	0.7	0.7
C. Interpersonal					
12 Discuss family, financial, employment problems	95.0	3.8	0.9	0	0.2
13 Discuss, clarify learning goals	93.0	4.1	2.5	0.2	0.2
14 Discuss academic progress	88.2	7.5	4.1	0	0.2
15 Discuss basic learning/study skills	95.0	2.9	1.8	0	0.2
16 Seek encouragement, moral support	90.3	6.3	2.7	0.5	0.2

14. Have you ever contacted your tutor for any reasons that are ***NOT*** listed in question 13?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please describe

11.4 help with technology, i.e. modem
48.6 administrative help
40.0 clarify content

15. Are you within easy driving distance of any research/study facilities?

(a) public library [_] 90.2
(b) high school or college library [_] 68.5
(c) local study centre set up by institution [_] 12.0
d) other [_]

16. Estimate the level of difficulty you personally face in the following areas:

	Not difficult 1	2	3	4	Very difficult 5	Can't say 6
a) using course materials	62.9	19.8	14.2	2.0	0.9	0.2
b) understanding/completing assignments	29.5	33.0	25.4	8.9	3.1	0.0
c) accessing resource material	33.6	20.4	20.6	11.9	9.8	3.8
d) developing study skills	36.6	24.5	20.2	12.7	4.8	1.1
(e) contacting/using support of tutor	29.5	12.1	10.3	8.7	8.4	31.1
(f) contacting/using support of other students	17.5	6.0	6.0	8.5	23.0	39.1
(g) finding enough time in the day	9.6	11.2	20.4	22.7	34.6	1.4
(h) other _____						

17. In your experience, has tutoring helped you in any way to deal with those difficulties? Describe briefly.

41.5 don't need or don't use tutor help
6.9 contact difficult, became frustrated
3.8 not aware of tutor
14.4 some academic help & support received
33.3 no response

18. Are there any other aspects of distance learning that cause problems for you?

33.3 no problems: grateful, realistic, pragmatic
11.1 miss student contact
10.8 hard to clarify content questions
8.9 miss tutor/prof contact

19. To what extent has tutoring in the current course helped you in the following areas? Circle one number in each line.

		Not at	Some	A moderate amount	A great deal	Can't say
(a)	acquire learning/study skills	46.7	15.4	12.2	3.2	22.6
(b)	understand course content	31.6	45.7	21.0	13.3	20.0
(c)	apply new knowledge to practical situations	43.3	12.1	14.4	8.4	21.8
(d)	develop/sustain self-confidence and morale	45.2	11.4	11.9	9.4	22.2
(e)	prepare for exams	42.3	12.4	16.1	5.4	23.8
(f)	solve administrative problems	53.6	9.7	6.0	3.2	27.5
(g)	develop critical thinking skills	39.4	17.2	14.2	8.0	21.2
(h)	other _____	44.8	1.5	0.7	2.2	50.7

20. What kind of help did you want to get from your tutor(s)? Check all that apply.

(a)	acquire learning/study skills	16.4	(e)	prepare for exams	41.0
(b)	understand course content	51.0	(f)	solve administrative problems	10.9
(c)	apply new knowledge to practical situations	21.5	(g)	develop critical thinking skills	25.5
(d)	develop/sustain self-confidence and morale	20.2	(h)	other _____	6.0

21. Which aspects of your distance learning do you enjoy the most?

57.4 time flexibility

22. Which aspects of your distance learning do you least enjoy?

28.7 no contact with student peers
17.4 time pressures
12.8 little contact with prof/tutor

23 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree	Can't say
	1	2	3	4	5	6
a) The studies of adult learners are adversely affected by the demands of home, family and work responsibilities.	3.8	7.8	17.9	22.9	45.1	2.4
b) The impact of home, family and work responsibilities is the same for men and women as they progress through a course.	28.4	20.1	11.9	8.7	17.2	13.6
c) A student's individual situation (family life, time or money constraints) is not relevant to the tutor-learner relationship.	26.7	24.4	12.6	11.4	10.1	14.8
d) Students should tell their tutors about home, family or work situations that affect their studies.	11.9	10.8	25.6	20.4	21.3	10.1
e) A tutor should be willing to take into account the home, family or work situation that affects a student's progress.	10.1	12.6	25.1	22.0	25.1	5.2
f) The institution cannot be expected to be flexible in its regulations to take into account the home, family or work situations of distance students.	26.8	23.4	20.5	13.4	12.1	3.8

24. Can *YOU* suggest any way(s) in which tutors could take special home, family or work situations into account?

50.2 flexibility in time deadlines

25. Did you receive any autobiographical information about your tutor (i.e., past experience, personal information)? Yes 56.9 No 43.1

If not, would you have liked some information? Yes 60.3 No 12.9 Can't say 26.7

CONTACT WITH TUTORS

59.2 40.8

26. Was the role of the tutor explained to you? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, how?

(a)	the institution gave an explanation in course materials	[_]	45.2
(b)	the tutor explained it him/herself	[_]	26.6
(c)	other students explained it to me	[_]	1.6
(d)	other _____	[_]	

27. Which of the following statements best describes the *initial* contact you had with your tutor?

(a)	the institution organized a face-to-face meeting	[_]	1.3
(b)	the tutor contacted me at the beginning of the course	[_]	5.8
(c)	the tutor contacted me after receiving my first formal assignment	[_]	4.9
(d)	I contacted the tutor at the beginning of the course	[_]	8.0
(e)	my first contact was through written comments on my first assignment	[_]	54.0
(f)	at the first audioconference	[_]	3.3
(g)	other _____	[_]	

28. How is contact made between you and your tutor during the course? Please circle one number in each line.

		Never	Rarely	Some-times	Often	N/A
(a)	the tutor telephones me to check on my progress	86.1	2.9	1.8	0	9.2
(b)	I request help and the tutor responds	35.4	15.1	16.1	8.3	25.0
(c)	the tutor is available during specific hours for students to call	10.9	4.9	21.0	48.1	15.1
(d)	my main contact with the tutor is through written comments on assignments	5.1	3.4	12.2	72.6	6.6
(e)	via computer E-mail (any time of day or night, at my convenience)	53.8	2.7	2.4	1.9	39.2
(f)	The tutor participates in the scheduled audio-conferenced classes of the course	45.4	2.5	3.8	6.6	41.8
(g)	I see the tutor face-to-face when I need to	69.9	1.6	1.6	1.6	25.2
(h)	other _____	35.2	1.9	3.7	11.1	48.1

Comments:

_____

_____

29. Using the list in question 28 above, what form(s) of contact is the best kind for you? Check more than one if applicable.

(a) 23.7	(d) 51.7	(g) 10.4
(b) 39.0	(e) 4.7	(h) 2.0
(c) 46.6	(f) 7.1	

30. When do you generally initiate contact with your tutor? Check the statement below that best describes your situation.

(a)	I do not contact the tutor	[_] 40.4
(b)	I contact the tutor only when I have a problem	[_] 47.7
(c)	I contact the tutor when I am preparing for an assignment or exam	[_] 5.8
(d)	I contact the tutor on a regular basis, regardless of specific problems	[_] 1.6
(e)	I contact the tutor after each assignment	[_] 1.3
(f)	Other _____	

31. How often, on average, are you in contact with your tutor?

(a)	Less than once a month	[_] 86.4	(c)	Once every 2 weeks	[_] 3.6
(b)	Once a month	[_] 8.9	(d)	Once a week	[_] 1.1

32. Would you like your tutor contacts to be more or less frequent?

more frequent	the same	less frequent	don't care
47.2	30.4	0.2	22.2

33. How do you feel, in general, about the quality of the contact you have with your distance tutor?

Very frustrated				Very satisfied
1	2	3	4	5
10.2	15.7	38.2	18.1	17.8

ASSIGNMENTS, FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION

34. How long does it usually take to get feedback on assignments?

(a)	within 2 weeks	[_] 17.4	(c)	within 4 weeks	[_] 34.7
(b)	within 3 weeks	[_] 35.0	(d)	more than 4 weeks	[_] 13.0

35 How are assignments usually returned to you returned to you?

regular mail	[_]	92.3	courier service	[_]	0.5
Priority Post	[_]	4.1	via distance education co-ordinator	[_]	3.2
			other _____	[_]	

36. Are you satisfied with this method of return? Yes 78.0 No 22.0

If not, why? _____

37. What is the most important kind of feedback for you, personally? Check only one box.

2.0/ a grade

1.8/ a grade with comments on grammar and syntax only

20.8/ a grade with content-related comments

74.8/ a grade with content-related comments plus encouragement

other _____

38. What kind of response do you most often receive on your written assignments? Check one box only.

12.1/ a grade

6.0/ a grade with comments on grammar and syntax only

47.3/ a grade with content-related comments

31.1/ a grade with content-related comments plus encouragement

other _____

39. Are you ever asked to indicate what you want the tutor to do in order to help your learning?

		17.1	82.9
(a)	by the institution	Yes	No
		11.7	88.3
(b)	by the tutor	Yes	No

If yes, how? 7.8 evaluation form
4.4 direct request
1.6 in written materials

If no, would you like to be asked this question? Yes = 59.3 No = 10.1 Can't say = 30.6

40. In your opinion, which skills are the most important for a good tutor? Rank order the following from 1 to 7 giving #1 to the most important.

		1	2	3			1	2	3
(a)	having adequate subject knowledge	34	34	21	(d)	being understanding about my problems	5	4	8
(b)	having applied/practical experience	10	17	27	(e)	understanding administrative procedures	18	0	2
(c)	being able to communicate the course content clearly	51	23	15	(f)	being available for advice or help	17	13	21
					(g)	having technical expertise with communications technology	2	3	3

100

41. Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding distance learning. Circle the number on the scale from 1 to 5 that best approximates your answer.

	Strongly disagree 1	2	3	4	Strongly agree 5
(a) When it comes to helping me learn, distance education tutors do the same thing as teachers in the classroom.	29.6	23.7	24.9	11.4	10.4
(b) With a good course manual I don't need the help of a tutor.	11.8	16.6	23.2	29.3	19.1
(c) Support and encouragement from a tutor are not important to my learning.	29.1	27.8	24.1	12.8	6.2
(d) I don't feel disadvantaged as a distance student.	9.4	16.1	24.0	24.9	25.6
(e) My work as a distance learner has helped me improve my general study skills.	6.0	7.4	26.2	28.9	31.5

42. Do you have any final comments regarding the role of the tutor in your distance learning?

10.0	satisfied with course and tutor/no complaints
10.0	didn't know about a tutor
8.6	want more contact with tutor, other students
8.0	no need for tutor even if available
6.9	more personal response and feedback

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!

Coding Instructions for Open-Ended Questions in Student Questionnaire

Question:

3. Residence:

    1 Major centres with university (same or other)
    2 Southern Ontario, no university
    3 Northern Ontario, no university
    4 Out of province, country

5. Program:

    1 General Arts, Education
    2 Social Sciences (Sociology, Psychology, Women's Studies)
    3 General Science, Math, Business, Statistics
    4 Home Economics, Physical Education, Other

12 Reasons:

    1 Credit requirement
    2 Work priority - convenience, flexibility to fit schedule
    3 Family priority - convenience, flexibility to fit schedule
    4 Distance, travel, only available option
    5 Interest, maintain knowledge
    6 Preferred learning style - control over pace and place
    7 Educational upgrade
    8 Miscellaneous

14 Other reasons for contact:

    1 Technical help (i.e modem)
    2 Administrative problem
    3 Clarify content

17 Tutoring help:

1 Not needed/not used
2 Contact difficult
3 Not aware of having tutor
4 Academic help given
5 Support & help given
6 University library or administrative services helped

18 Problem areas:

1 Lack of student contact
2 Lack of tutor/professor contact
3 General academic guidance lacking
4 Hard to clarify content
5 Ambiguous requirements
6 Slow feedback, comes too late
7 Motivation difficult
8 Format & logistics of course
9 No problems - enjoy

21 Enjoy the most:

1 No travel
2 Time flexibility/convenience
3 Able to combine work, family, study
4 Challenge of independent learning
5 Course content
6 Less stress

22 Least enjoy:

1 No peer contact
2 Little tutor/professor contact
3 Assignments
4 Slow feedback - frustration
5 Content problems
6 Specific course design features
7 Time pressure, deadlines
8 Assessment
9 Miscellaneous

24 Individual situations:

1 Should not affect
2 Sometimes - in real emergency
3 More flexible deadlines, without penalty
4 Understand pressures, encourage
5 Regular phone calls, contact
6 Moral support

39 How asked?

1 Evaluation form from institution
2 Mentioned in written documentation
3 Direct request from tutor
4 Other

42 Final comments:

01 No tutor help used
02 No help needed
03 Affective needs important
04 Greater contact desired
05 Personal response appreciated
06 Course materials the most important
07 Feedback on assignments
08 Context (work, family, studies)
09 Good facilitator needed
10 Satisfied with tutor help received
11 Satisfied with course overall
12 Not satisfied with course
13 Not satisfied with tutor help received
14 Miscellaneous

APPENDIX C

List of Project Consultative Committee Members

Appendix C

Members of Project Consultative Committee

1. Ms. Christine Nelson
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   Athabasca University

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   Research Analyst
   Centre for Distance Education
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3. Dr. Gene Rubin
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   Athabasca University

5. Dr. Margaret Haughey
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6. Mr. Denis Mayer
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   Laurentian University

7. Prof. Sally Haag
   Teaching Research and Continuing Education
   University of Waterloo

8. Mr. Richard Leavens
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9. Dr. Jeannine Laurent
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10. Ms. Arlene Zuckernick
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